

The Adventurers: A new exploration of the archives

Summary of the Proceedings of the Adventurers



Effigies Ionæ Moore Matheseos
Professoris Etat. suæ . 45 . An. Dni. 1660

Preface

This document presents a summary of the six minute books that make up the Proceedings of the Adventurers. The archive is held by the Cambridgeshire Archives in Ely (Reference: KBLC/2/1/1 to KBLC/2/1/6).

References to the original archive are shown by superscript numbers (e.g., Cromwell²³) and detailed in the **Reference** sections at the back of this document. These entries refer to the date and paragraph number from five transcription books that accompany this document. To locate the original text, simply find the referenced date and number in the relevant book. References to other section are made in parenthesis (e.g., see **Oliver Cromwell**).

All text in *italics* shows the original text from the 17th century with original spellings.

The transcription and accompanying work was funded the National Heritage Lottery Fund (Project reference number: NS-21-00172)

The transcriptions and preparation of this summary were carried out by Peter Daldorphon behalf of the Word Garden.

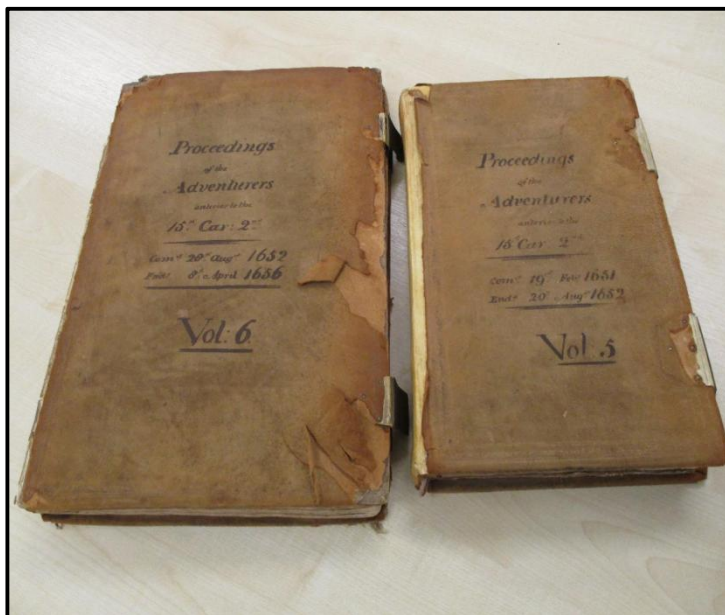
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Introduction

In May 1649 the Act of Drainage of the Great Level of the Fens was passed in Parliament that enabled the drainage of approximately 300,000 acres (1200 km²) of land, stretching from the River Welland to the north of Peterborough, across Cambridgeshire and on to Norfolk and Suffolk. These great works were financed by a group of individuals called the Adventurers who in return would receive 95,000 acres of the drained land once the work was complete. The project, led by the William Russell, the 5th Earl of Bedford, also known as the 2nd Undertaking, followed similar work carried out in the 1630s in the 1st Undertaking, organised by many of the same men and led by the Earl of Bedford's father Francis Russell. This earlier project, however, was deemed unsuccessful by the Lord Commissioners who, on behalf of Parliament, were responsible for judging whether a successful drainage had been achieved. Consequently, despite spending large amounts of money on the works, the Adventurers failed to receive their return of land. The 2nd Undertaking was partly a means to recover these losses. Similar failure would increase these losses and potentially result in financial ruin for many of the Adventurers.

During the following years, money was raised and the drainage works were carried out; eventually to be judged successful by the Lord Commissioners in Peterborough in March 1651 for the northern area and in March 1653 for the southern area of the Great Level. Before they achieved this, however, the Adventurers faced enormous problems, including a constant struggle with finance, opposition by the people of the Fens and the complexity of managing the enormous scale of the project. It was by far the largest civil engineering project this country had ever seen.



Picture 1 Proceedings of the Adventurers

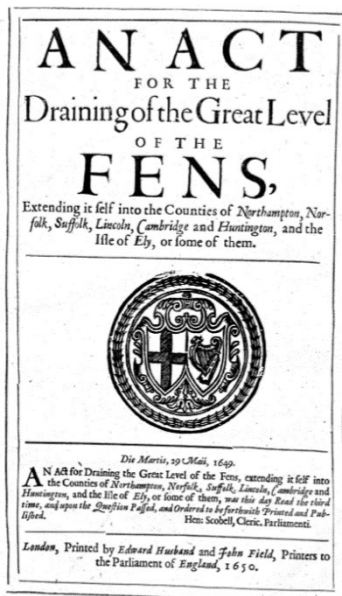
During this time, the Company of Adventurers met every few days in London and elsewhere, to manage the works. These meetings were recorded in minute books that survive to this day and are now held by Cambridgeshire Archives in Ely. The archives cover 805 meetings and reveal the true story of the Adventurers and the drainage of the Fens.

A National Heritage Lottery Fund project (The Adventurers in the Fens) has funded the completion of a full and openly available transcription of these minute books. This document provides a summary of their contents as well as index information.

England in 1649

In May 1649, when the Act of Parliament to drain the Fen was passed, only 4 months had passed since the execution of Charles the 1st. England was governed by a Council of State, controlled by the generals who won the civil war. The country had suffered years of the turmoil and brutality and, overall, a higher proportion of the population of the Great Britain was killed in this conflict than in the First World War. The Adventurers were in many ways the winners of this conflict; almost all from the Parliamentary side, many were powerful men at the heart of power, immensely wealthy politicians, landowners and businessmen. In today's world, several would be sitting in cabinet; others would CEOs. The drainage works were

delivered, however, by a cross section of society; engineers, accountants, scientists, and a great army of labourers; similar in scale to the armies that fought in the civil war.



Picture 2 Act of Drainage

Whereas the said Great Level, by reason of frequent overflowing of the Rivers of Welland, Neane, Grant, Owse, Brandon, Mildenhall and Stoeke have been of small and uncertain profit, but (if drained), may be improved and made profitable, and of great Advantage to the Commonwealth, and the particular Owners, Commoners and Inhabitants, and be fit to bear Cole-seed and Rape-seed in great abundance, which is of singular use to make Sope and Oyls within this Nation, to the advancement of the Trade of Clothing and Spinning of Wooll, and much of it will be improved into good pasture for feeding and breeding of Cattell, and for Tillage, to be sown with Corn and Grain, and for Hemp and Flax in great quantity, for making all sorts of Linen Cloth, and Cordage for Shipping within this Nation, which will increase Manufactures, Commerce, and Trading at home and abroad, will relieve the Poor, by setting them on work, and will many other ways rebound to the great advantage and strengthening of the Nation.

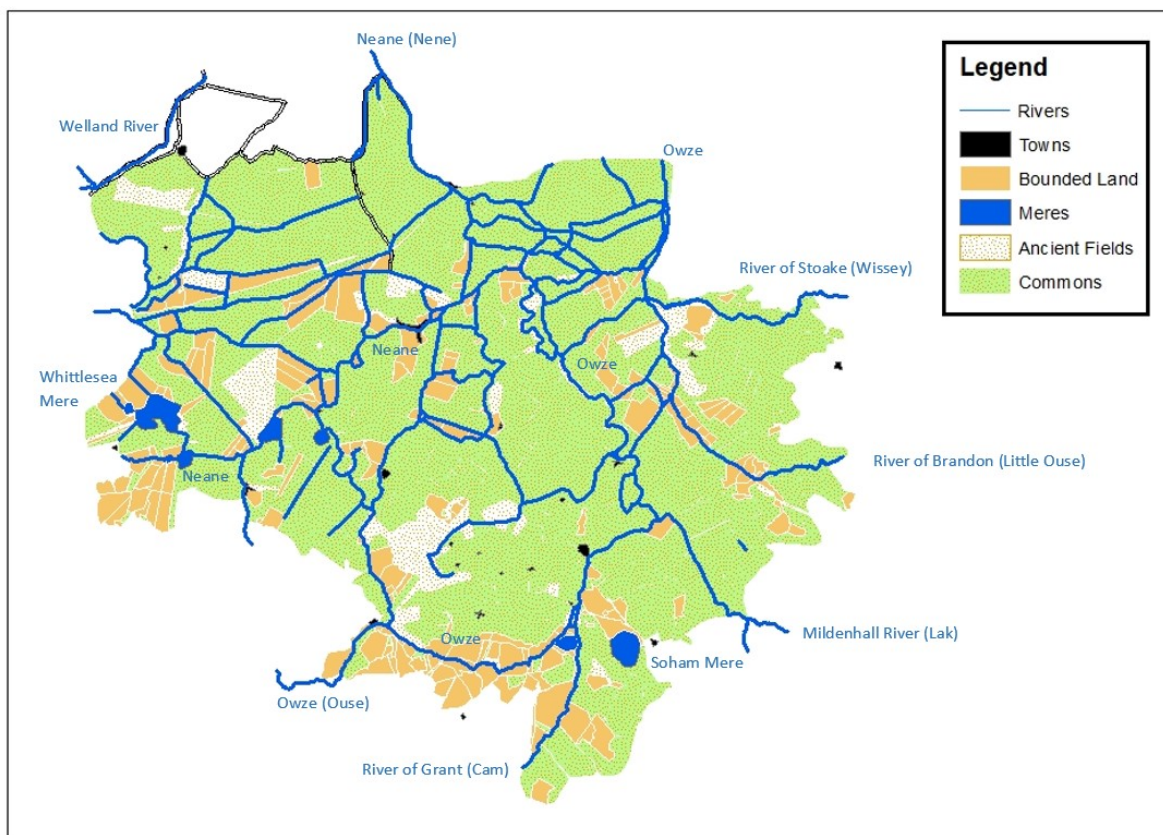
The Drainage Works

Although ecologically rich and wild, the Fens were not a natural wilderness prior the drainage works of the 17th century; many flood defence and drainage works had been created over the centuries, going back as far as the Romans, including great drains such as Moreton's Leam and sea defences around the Wash, managed by local Commissions of Sewers. The established economy and way of life was based on complex and long held rules and rights, to access common land, to harvest crops such as reeds and sedge and gather of fish and fowl. This management system and way of life was disrupted by the 1st Undertaking then by the civil war, so that the existing drainage works were in a poor state by 1649. The challenge facing the Adventurers was not only to drain the Fens, as set out in the Act of Parliament; it was also to repair the existing structures and create a system of management that would prevent the drainage works falling into a state of disrepair once more.

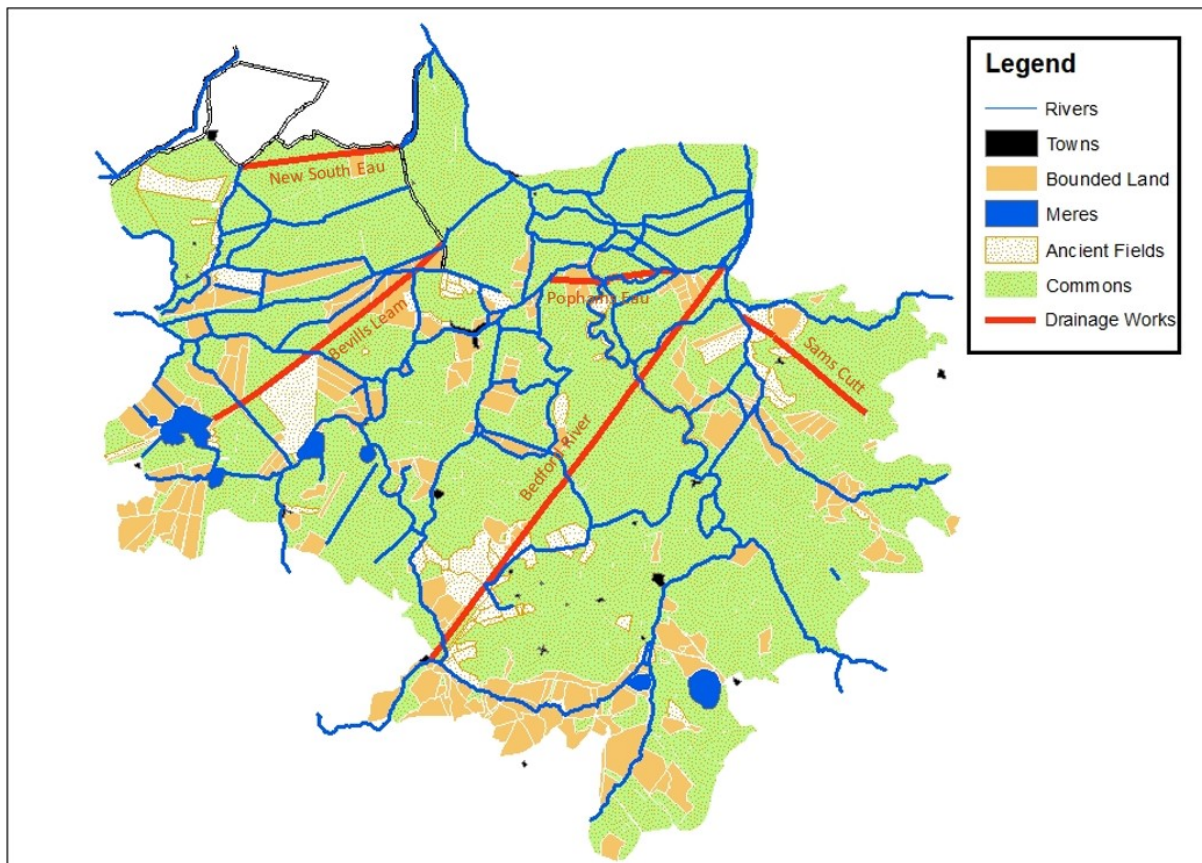
Although the 1st Undertaking was not, in the end, judged successful, it achieved major 'inroads' into the drainage of the Fens. Several major drains, most notably the Bedford River that runs 21 miles from Earith to Salter's Lode and, earlier, Moreton's Leam and the wash around it (Maps 1 and 2), showed that drainage could be achieved by diverting water through a shortened route to the sea, replacing the old original meandering network of Fenland rivers. The Adventurers followed this approach, led by Sir Cornelius Vermuyden which he laid out by him in a treatise in 1642⁵.



Picture 3 Biebrza Marshes in Poland (perhaps the place in Europe most like the pre-drainage Fens)



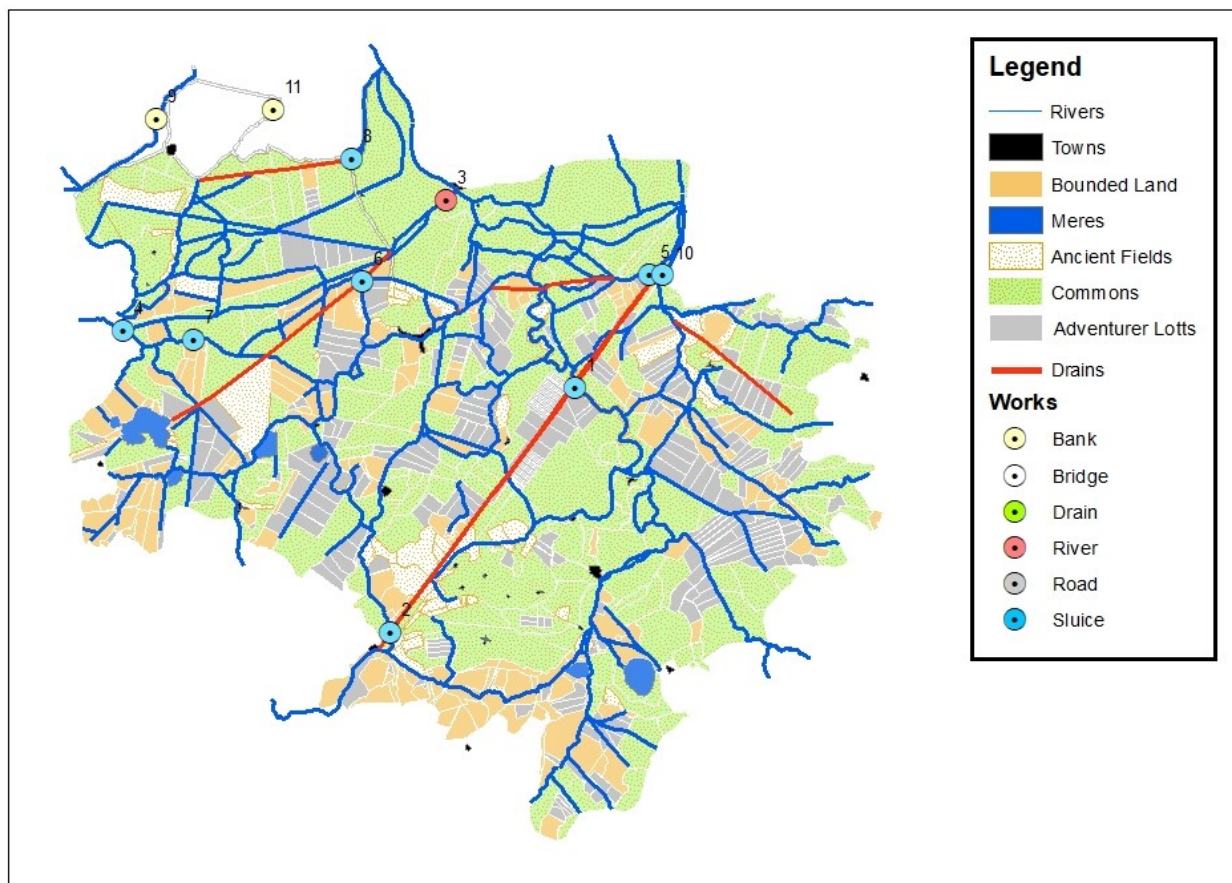
Map 1 The Great Level in 1604 before the drainage work of the 17th Century (based on the maps of William Hayward 1604 and Jonas Moore 1657)



Map 2 The Great Level in 1649 before the 2nd Undertaking

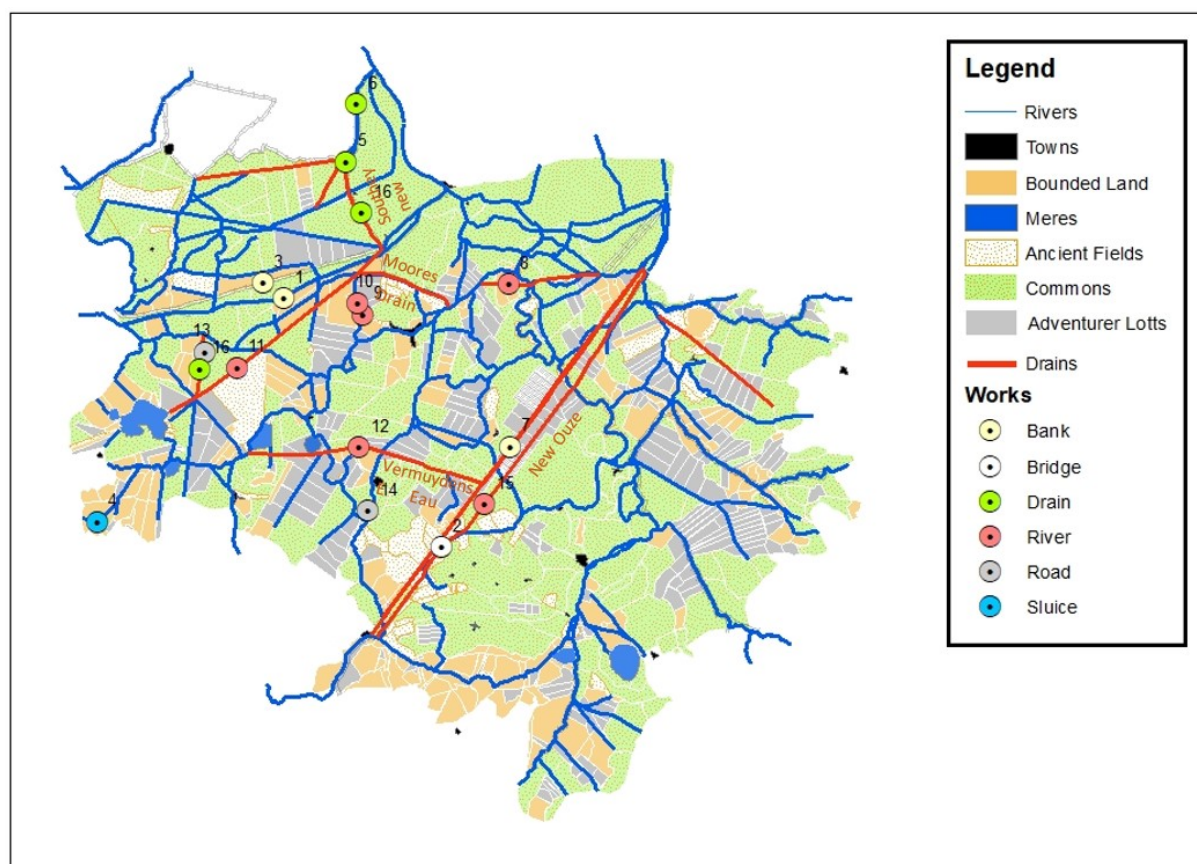
After the passing of the Act of Parliament, little progress was made with the work during **1649** because the necessary organisation and finances were not yet in place, and discussions with Sir Cornelius Vermuyden about his appointment as Director of Works were unresolved (see **Sir Cornelius Vermuyden**). In addition, a dispute with Benjamin Weston about ownership of 2,000 acres of the Adventurers land¹ delayed funding of the work further. Investors were unwilling to commit money while this uncertainty remained; the Adventurers themselves declaring that *unles they might enjoy the 95000 acres(onley admitting Mr Weston for his 2000 acres) the recompence would not countervayle there hazard and charge and dared not to proceede further in the said undertaking* (eventually this dispute was resolved in Parliament). The summer, the best time for the works, was therefore largely wasted and the only work undertaken, led by Colonel Dodson, the interim Director of Works, ended in farce. Within weeks of workers being deployed in raising banks, the Company ran out of money². They wrote to Colonel Dodson to cease the works, but their letter failed to arrive in time and they worked on for a few more days, the resulting debt requiring hasty raising of funds. This, however, fell short and Colonel Dodson was forced to pay £200 to the workmen himself (see **The Workers**). Even then, the workmen ended up short changed and fell *into mutanies and seize upon the officers and threaten to carry them away and cut them in peeces*.

The drainage work only began in earnest in the spring after the appointment of Sir Cornelius Vermuyden as Director of Works in January **1650** (full details of the drainage works between 1649 and 1656 are provided in References 1). Sir Cornelius Vermuyden and Robert Burton, the day to day manager of the works, met in Wisbech, along with Lieutenant Colonel Underwood and Mr Clapthorne, on the 8th March 1650 to plan the summer's work³. The area between the River Welland and the Bedford River (now called the Old Bedford River) was prioritised; in particular repairs to the bank of the Bedford River and the sea defences in north Cambridgeshire. Throughout the period of the minute books (1649 to 1656), the Adventurers were acutely aware that a failure of these coastal defences could be ruinous for the entire project.



Map 3 Drainage works undertaken in 1650 (see References 1 for a full list of the works)

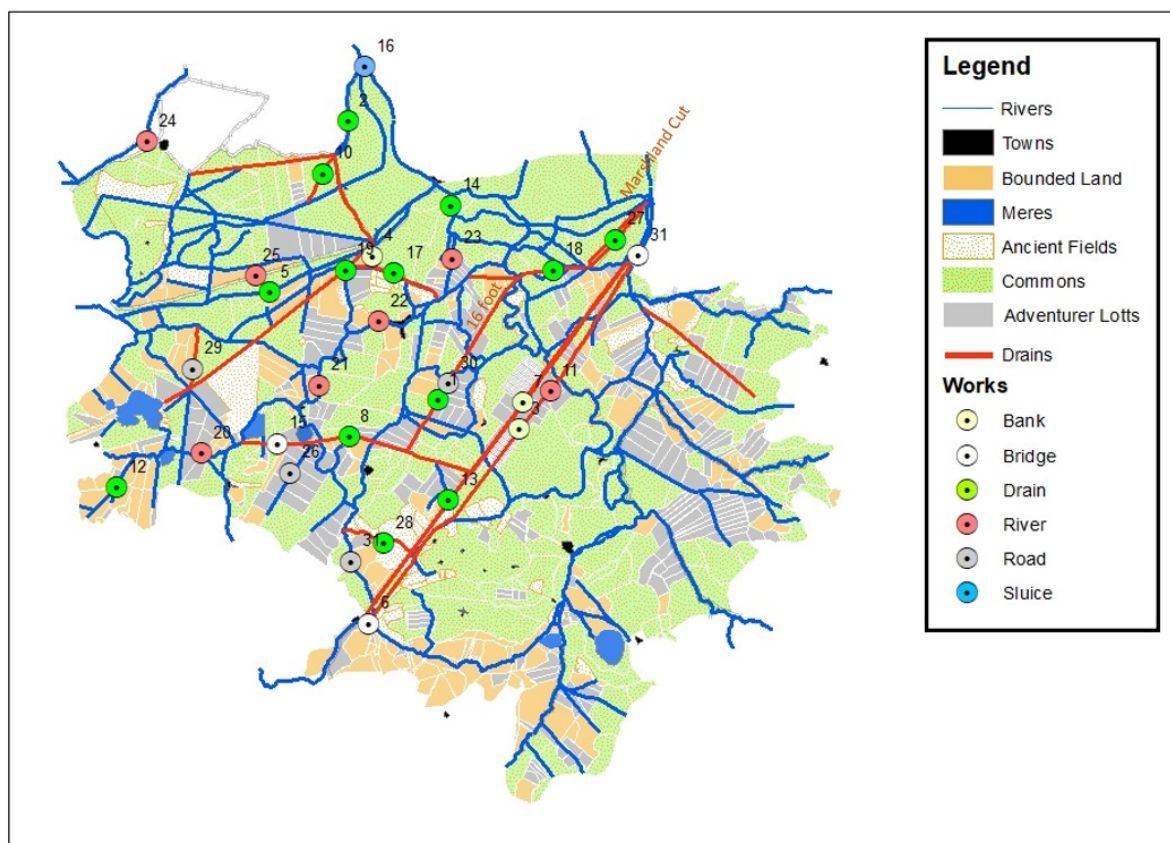
In **1651** work continued on repairing the existing works, including the banks on the south side and north side of Morton's Leam, the north side of Bedford River and work to deepen and widen Whittlesea Dyke, the Shire Drain, Bevills Leam and Pophams Eau. 1651 also marked a shift to the great new works, notably the creation of the 100 Foot River (called the *New Owze* in the minute books) to run alongside the Bedford River. This 21 miles tidal river would take the entire flow from the Bedford Ouse, one of the largest rivers in England, to shorten its route to the sea, whilst also creating wash lands to store water during times of flood (the Ouse Washes); the most ambitious and risky part of the project. In addition, a 40 foot drain called Vermuyden's Eau (or 40 Foot) was built to take water from the Middle Level to the Bedford River. The Hundred Foot River was first marked out in March⁴ and the excavation of the new river continued until late summer, after which work began on *bottoming* the channel (preparing the channel bed and banks to take the flow). In addition, new sluices were built at Crowland and Guyhurne, and new bridges at Ramsey, Sutton, Mepal and Sawtry. Bridges were required to cross new drains that, otherwise, would cut off large areas of the country from local people; also required to move livestock and goods.



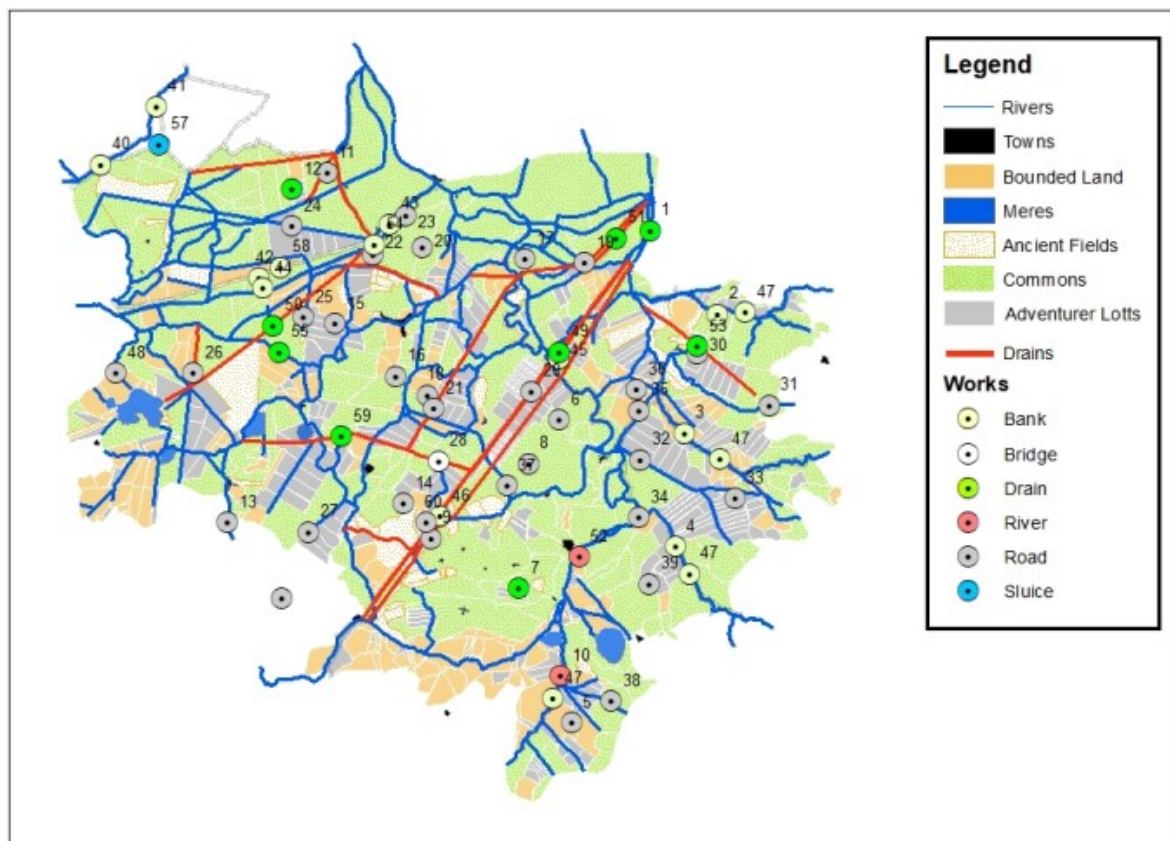
Map 4 Drainage works undertaken in 1651 (see References 1 for a full list of the works)

In **1652**, the bottoming of the 100 Foot River continued and in July, after much delay, the dam was opened and the river began to run. The Bedford River was also bottomed to take the additional flow from Vermuyden's Eau. The other major works were the construction of the 16 foot drain (then Thurloe's drain) joining Vermuyden's Eau and Popham's Eau, the completion of Hamond's Eau between the Bedford River and West Water, and the construction of a drain down called the Bedford Dreyne from Welches dam to Earith (now called the Counter Drain).

In **1653**, the Marshland Cut, the final large new drain, was created, connecting Popham's Eau to the sea, along with many new works in on the South Level, including the embankment of the Stoke River (now Wissey), Brandon River (Little Ouse) and Mildenhall River (Lark). Unlike the northern part of the Fens, no new major drains were built in the southern area and the drainage was achieved by building floods banks around the existing rivers. In previous designs Sir Cornelius Vermuyden had proposed a large drain to take the flow from these rivers to a shorter route the sea, but this was ruled out by finance because the budget for the drainage works had already been exceeded (eventually, such a channel, called the Cut Off Channel was built in the 1950s). Other smaller works were continued throughout this period; the construction of new sluices to transfer water across the drainage system and tunnels to allow the movement of water through banks and roads. 1653 also began the building of many new roads across the Fens. This was essential to allow the Adventurers to make profits from areas of old common land, previously unconnected to existing transport routes. Many of the current roads in the Fens come from this time; a lesser known achievement of the works.

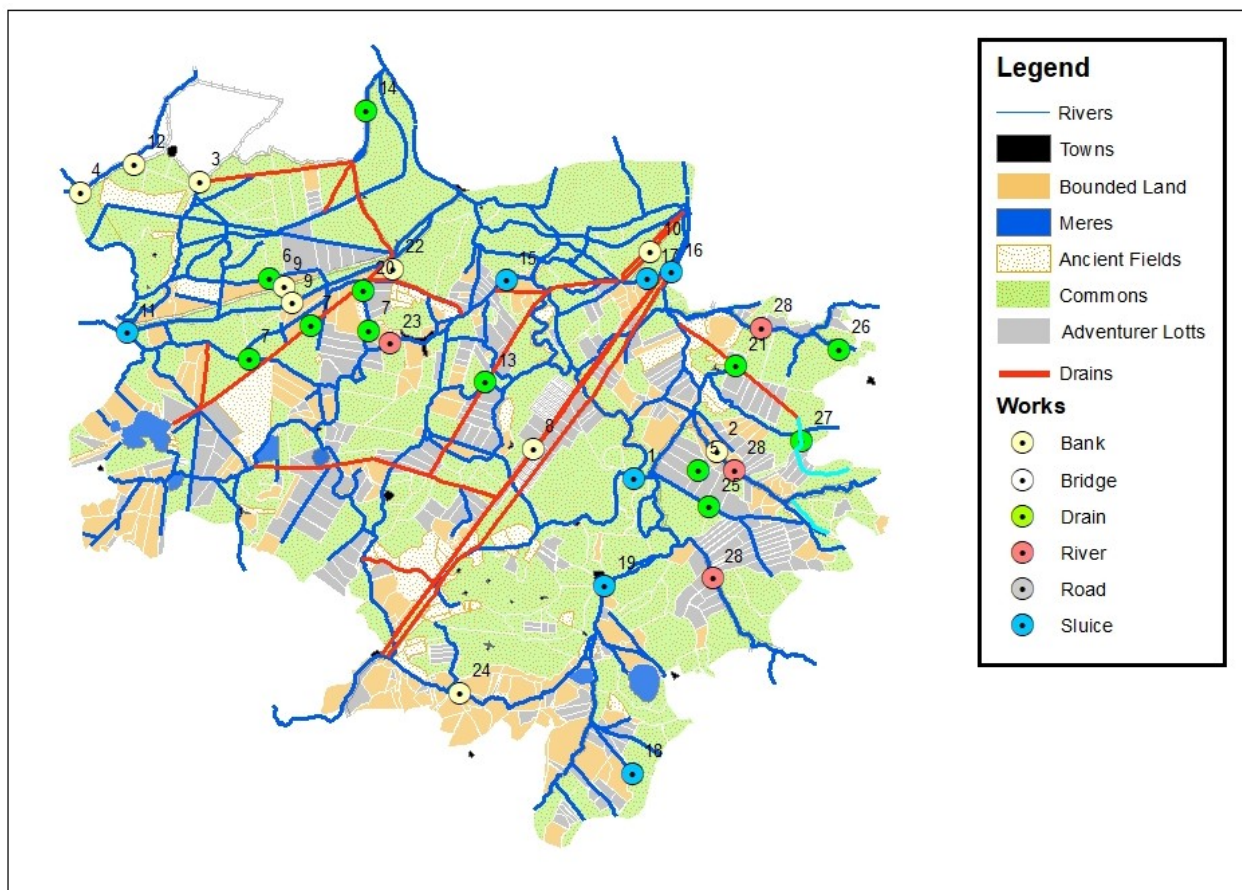


Map 5 Drainage works undertaken in 1652 (see References 1 for a full list of the works)



Map 6 Drainage works undertaken in 1653 (see References 1 for a full list of the works)

By **1654** most of the major works had been completed so the effort shifted to maintenance and repairs. This included the south banks for the Bedford River and Brandon River. Instructions were also given to deepen the River Nene, Whittlesey Dyke and Bevills Leame, raise and widen the north bank of the Bedford River and Moreton's Leame and bottom the Marshland Cut, removing silt from its doors and sluices. The 16 Foot drain was deepened and scoured out and the sluices at Stanground repaired and improved. Two sluices were set on the River Nene and sluices and sasses were repaired at Well Creek, Ely hards and on the Shire Drain. The Waldersey Bank was repaired and heightened. Several rivers and drains were ordered to be scoured including Popham's Eau, Pope's Lode and Sam's Cut. The regular repairs to the banks, referred to throughout the minute books, suggests that they were not well made; perhaps because the materials to build strong banks were not readily available in the Fens. In areas of deep peat, many miles from solid ground, the cost of moving such material to build and repair banks would have greatly increased costs so compromise was inevitable. Banks built largely from peat would deteriorate rapidly by peat wastage and would need to be repaired within years.



Map 7 Drainage works undertaken in 1654 (see References 1 for a full list of the works)

In **1655** the work was concentrated on the repair of banks. including the north bank of Moreton's Leam, Southea bank, the sea bank at Tyd, the Shire Drain bank and the bank from Peakirk in the North Level. In the Middle Level, work was carried out on the north bank of Bedford River, the south bank of Moreton's Leam, Berry Bank and the banks of the receptacle at Holme. In the South Level, work was carried out on the south bank of the 100 Foot River and the banks on both side of the Rivers Grant, Ouse, Mildenhall, Brandon and Stoake, as well as Downham Eau.

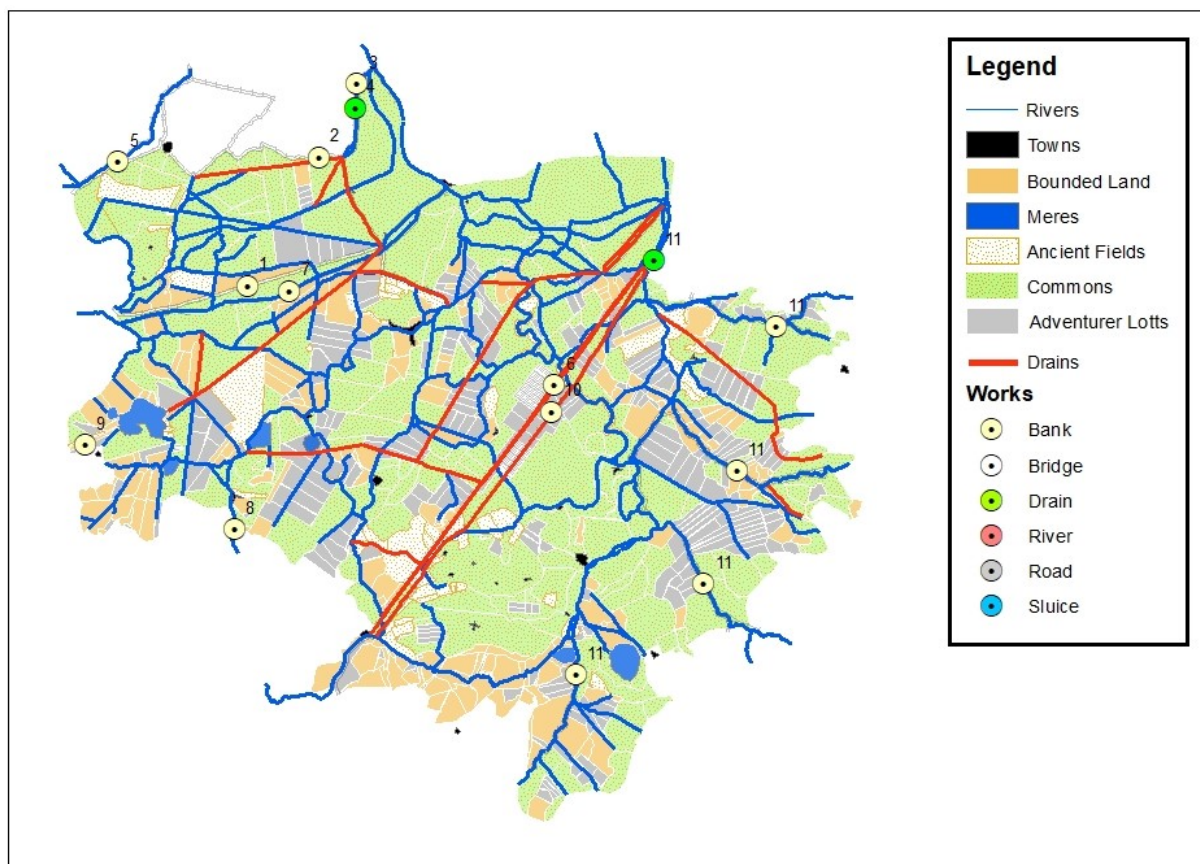
Throughout the 1649-1656 period, there was also a need to mark out the Adventurers land by the making boundary dikes called division dikes⁵. Because larger works were prioritised, progress with the division

dikes was far slower than the Adventurers had planned, a cause of great frustration to them because they could only profit from their recently acquired land once the landholdings were established.

The Engineering

The minute books provide only fleeting references to how the drainage works were carried out; as with Company directors today, the Adventurers did not concern themselves much with such day to day details.

Instructions for the works were the responsibility of Sir Cornelius Vermuyden, the Director of Works¹. This arrangement, however, broke down toward the end of the period when Vermuyden's relationship with the Company deteriorated (see **Sir Cornelius Vermuyden**).



Map 8 Drainage works undertaken in 1655 (see References 1 for a full list of the works)

The construction of new drains began with lockspitting; the marking out of the route by cutting a narrow trench, noting the conditions on the ground as they progressed² (*observe as hee goes along the severall lowes and blaults and gravells as farre as hee can*). This was directed by the Company surveyors, notably Jonas Moore who led the surveying team. Laying out the path of the drains across the ever-changing, boggy land of the Fens must have been a hard and at times perilous task that still required great accuracy; in the largest drains, such as Vermuyden's Eau and the 16 foot, straight lines were drawn to join fixed start and end points, in these cases over 15 miles apart. Crossing parts of the Fens would have been barred by many small watercourses and one entry in the minute books mentions help given to the surveyors with rowing boats³. Marking out of division dikes to define the boundaries of the Adventurers land also required great accuracy to avoid later land disputes (many disputes in fact took place). A long metal chain was used to ensure distances were measured accurately⁴. Many of the drains were, and still are, unerringly straight so no adjustments seems to have been made for the state of the ground.

erosion during times of floods¹¹. Were dykes were built along the base of the banks to receive run off water and to prevent access by livestock¹². The Company were very strict in defining the dimensions of these banks and several disputes arose when these instructions were not followed¹³.



Picture 5 Victorian drainage works

Once the channels were dug, there is mention of *bottoming*¹⁴ the drains and rivers. Again, there is no description of what this entailed, although in the case of the new Owze, it took far longer than the excavation of the channel (10 months) so could not have been an easy task. Presumably, *bottoming* entailed work to remove debris from the channels (e.g. bog oak) and stabilising them by putting down solid material on the bed and sides (e.g. gravels and clay). *Bottoming* is also mentioned on existing drains so it must have been possible to do this when they were full of water¹⁵.

When the drains were being constructed, dams were placed where they joined existing rivers and drains, which were removed once the channels were completed. At both Vermuyden's Eau and the *new Owze* this was delayed, and at Vermuyden's Eau there is mention of experimenting with the flow before it became fully operational, perhaps by incomplete removal of the dam¹⁶.

Once open, there was a need to dredge or *scowre* the drains to prevent them silting up and this was carried out in many places. Sir Cornelius Vermuyden¹⁷ gives an instruction of how to *sludge* the drains *by longe poles and a peece of plancke at the ende, and roade it, the workemen will know what I mean*.

Sluices and sasses were complex wooden structures that were used to regulate the flow of water between drains and to the sea, and allow for the passage of boats. Their construction, following the directions of Sir Cornelius Vermuyden (e.g. the dimensions and number of doors) and managed by Christian Derikson¹⁸, required the purchase of large pieces of timber and the work of many carpenters¹⁹. Some indication of their complexity comes from their costs; for example £3240 for the sluices at Salters Lode²⁰. A stock of timber was held at Downham Park²¹.

The construction of bridges across the drains required large timbers as well as a solid foundation made of gault, sedge and gravel. Many carpenters were employed on this work²³. The minute books also mention the building of a draw bridge at Wisbech to allow large boats passage²³ and, on request for a bridge at Sutton to cross the *new Owze*, the Company offered to give them a bridge already framed at Earith²⁴.

Highways were built by first laying *sedge upon the ground and then gravell on the top*²⁵, often with drains created to the side. The highways were first lockspitted in the same way as the drains.

This complex array of works required a huge army of labourers as well as many skilled workers. Only one worker's death is recorded in the minute books²⁶, but, surely, bearing in mind the nature of the work, beside water and boggy ground, there must have been more.

The Company of Adventurers

The Company of Adventurers consisted of the men who owned the lots of Adventurers land set out in St Ives Law of 1637; 20 lots, each of 4000 acres, plus 15,000 acres not set out¹. Originally these lots were divided between the Adventurers and Participants who funded the 1st Undertaking but by 1649 many of these men had died. Furthermore, many lots were sold before and during the 2nd Undertaking so a far wider group of men were represented as Adventurers at the meetings of the Company than the original group who started the work in 1649. The minute books include the names of 208 men who attended the meetings as Adventurers between 1649 and 1656 (a detailed list of attendees is provided in Appendix 1). The original Participants in the 1st Undertaking were aristocrats and wealthy landowners but this changed in the 1650s to include businessmen and merchants, also reflecting the change of the times from the rule of Charles I to the Commonwealth. The Adventurers, however, continued to include several members from old aristocratic families, such as the Earl of Bedford and the Earl of Arundel. Several of the Adventurers were close associates of Oliver Cromwell, including Lord Chief Justice Oliver St John, Secretary of State John Thurloe and Major General Edward Whalley, while many were Members of Parliament. Several of the key Adventurers had close family ties², for example John Latch had two uncles who were Adventurers (Miles Wolfe and Sir Thomas Allen) and his cousins, Sarah Parsons and John Knight, both had interests in Adventurer lands. Robert Henley was cousin to John Fountayne and Anthony Hamond's son married the daughter of John Marsham.

The Company directed the works from meetings, mostly held in Temple Bar in London, communicating with the Fens via letters sent by messengers (a complete list of the meeting places is provided in Appendix 2). Several of the Adventurers were sent to reside in the Fens as comptrollers and superintendents to manage the day to day works, notably Robert Castel, Anthony Hamond and John Latch. Wealthy businessman, Robert Henley was an important member of the Adventurers, attending far more meetings than anyone else, and was influential in the proceedings because of his wealth and political contacts.

The Company employed a small team of officers, including overseers who managed the activities on site as well as surveyors and clerks. Bearing in mind the huge scale of the works, these officers were a remarkably small group, between 10 and 30 men throughout most of the undertaking³ (Appendix 3 provides a list of the officers). Sir Cornelius Vermuyden, as Director of Works, was responsible for the engineering design.

This following text section tells the stories of the key men who drained the Fens.

Sir Cornelius Vermuyden

Sir Cornelius Vermuyden, who was born in Sint-Maartensdijk on the Isle of Tholen in Zeeland in the Netherlands in 1595⁴, had a long history of managing drainage projects before 1649, including work on the Thames flood defences, the draining of Hatfield Chase in Yorkshire, as well as leading the drainage of the Fens before the civil war when King Charles led the works. He also issued a pamphlet on his design of the drainage of the Fens in 1642⁵ that outlined the key parts of his scheme. His previous work was not without controversy, however; the Hatfield Chase project ended in chaos as the locals in Yorkshire rose up against the drainers, with much of their work overturned.



Picture 6 Sir Cornelius Vermuyden

Vermuyden was an important part of the team that advocated the drainage works in Parliament before the Drainage Act was passed, responding to objections to the drainage works at meetings in London. Early entries in the minute books appear to assume that Vermuyden would stay on as their Director of Works, being named as such only five days after the Act was passed on the 6th May 1649⁶, prior to any contract negotiations. Many of the Adventurers would have met Vermuyden during the period when he worked for the King and the impression given by the minute books is that, even before he became involved in their works, they had concerns about his personality. Opposing these reservations, however, Vermuyden had unique experience in directing large scale drainage works, as well as contacts for the supply of labourers and materials. No other obvious candidates were available to manage the great sums of money they intended to invest in the Fens. The following months revealed that Vermuyden understood the strength of this bargaining position.

The contract negotiations between the company and Vermuyden started in June 1649. During these negotiations, the Adventurers were concerned that Vermuyden would be insufficiently cautious in spending their money while Vermuyden was equally wary they would meddle with his management of the project and make it harder for him to realise his plans. Even from the start the Adventurers' opinion of Vermuyden appears to have been divided with seven wishing to offer him 2000 acres as part of the deal, whilst seven proposed to offer 4000 acres, the latter being agreed in the end⁷. Vermuyden then demanded 4000 acres of land in Yaxley, Farcett and Peterborough Soake as his payment, exempt from taxes until the cost of the works reached £90000, plus a further payment of £1000. He would also determine the taxes required to be raised while interference in his work by the Company would *be so lymitted that it shall not bee in prejudice* to him and that *hee shall be freed of charges and taxes towards any worke in vaine or retarding* by them. Clearly, Vermuyden was concerned that the Adventurers would impose a penalty for exceeding their budget and, at the same time, interfere with the management of the work and, thereby, make it harder to meet the budget. In response, the Company demanded that, after the adjudication, Vermuyden should be responsible for repairs to his own work whilst his reward of land should be set out indifferently across the Fens rather than being close to Peterborough, fearing that he would favour his own land⁹. The Company would decide when and how much taxes were raised, also stating that he could not sell more than 2000 acres of land for ten years after the adjudication, while ultimate control of the works must rest with them. The Company offered him £300 plus £20 per month. In

response, Vermuyden, replied that their control would force down the cost and make the work *not so great and substantial* which might then force him to pay for *repairs ... unfairly sought after wet times and floods*, also asserting that he would not favour his own land. He offered to hold his lands for just five years⁹ but refused to hand the Adventurers control, insisting that it would, based on his previous experience, compromise the works. He asserted that his demands were small compared to the benefits they would gain, *to recover your lost estates and gaine to the Comon Wealth and a great a vaste country*. Implicit in this last statement is Vermuyden's belief that only he could deliver a successful drainage. Eventually, they would have to do as he wished. This exchange led to the first of many break downs in the relationship between the Company and Vermuyden; again and again he showed disregard for their opinions and in return they lost trust in him. Vermuyden not being English may have also contributed to these difficulties; as a foreigner he could set himself apart from social norms. Prejudice on the Adventurer's side may also have played a part.

Ten days later, the Company made a further offer and proposed to meet him at Peterborough to agree final terms¹⁰. They raised their offer to £333 and also raised the expenditure limit to £95,000 before he had to pay tax. However, the offer of land would be reduced to 3000 acres if this cost were exceeded and reduced to nothing if it rose above £100,000. Unsurprisingly, Vermuyden considered this offer worse. No agreement followed but in July the Company improved the offer, reducing the period Vermuyden had to hold his land to 7 years and that he should either receive £1000 or have a further 4000 acres¹¹.

in September, Vermuyden suggested their differences should be referred to the Lord Chief Justice and Adventurer, Oliver St John¹² but, shortly afterwards, the Company were informed that Sir Cornelius Vermuyden had prepared a petition to Parliament against them¹³ that their scheme would prejudice navigation to Kings Lynn, after which negotiation were suspended. The Adventurers began searching for *other artists for effectinge of the workes of dreyning*.

Alternatives, however, did not appear and in October 1649 Sir Cornelius Vermuyden was asked for his final demands which he delivered to them on the 1st December, stating he was not willing to negotiate further, refusing to show them his designs or allow them any *comptrol of the work*¹⁴. The Company, in turn, replied that this was unreasonable, and Vermuyden then *utterly refused to have anythinge do doe with the dreyning of the fennes*¹⁵. On the same day, a proposition to drain the Fens was submitted to the Company by Sir Edward Partherich, an Adventurer with an estate in the Fens near Littleport¹⁶.

Robert Henley, a leading Adventurers and supporter of Vermuyden, offered 4000 acres of his own land and a further 4000 acres that he would purchase, to be transferred to Vermuyden if he completed the drainage for the charge of less than £109700 and was willing to lose this land to the Company in default¹⁷, a deal that later resulted in an acrimonious dispute between the men. The Company also agreed to meet Vermuyden's demand for a payment of £1000¹⁸.

During this period Sir Cornelius Vermuyden was guarded about the details of his designs¹⁹, fearing, no doubt, that others might be employed to implement them once they were shared.

The Company met on the 12th December 1649 to decide between the proposals of Sir Cornelius Vermuyden and Sir Edward Partherich²⁰. Vermuyden's proposal included Mr Henley's offer and an agreement not to sell 2000 acres of his land until 7 years had passed. The overall cost of the work was £110,000. If Vermuyden were to die during the works, his eldest son, also named Cornelius, would take over. He also maintained his demand for a large area of his land to be close to Peterborough. The Adventurers voted on which proposal to choose and all but two of them (Mr Henley and Mr Ingram) chose Sir Edward Partherich's proposal to drain 104,000 acres in a year at a far lower price of £30000 plus £500 for his fee^{21,22}. The Company stated in a letter to the Earl of Norwich on the 13th December that *the*

Company is completely broken of with Sir Cornelius Vermuyden and requested help with finding men of skill to help with the work.

On the 1st January 1659, however, Vermuyden offered to demonstrate that Sir Edward Patherich's design for the works was defective and would fail to drain the Fens²³. The Company requested that he submit this in writing the following day. No details are available of this submission but on the 24th January a draft agreement was drawn up between the Company and Sir Cornelius Vermuyden²⁴, an agreement that fell significantly short of his previous demands; the sum of £90,000 was restored above which he would pay taxes and overall control would reside with the Company. This episode suggests that although Sir Cornelius Vermuyden had unique experience in directing drainage works, placing him in a strong bargaining position, his advantage may not have been as strong as he thought. Perhaps he needed the project as much as they needed him and once an alternative offer, even an inferior one, was on the table, he conceded ground.

Initially, the work progressed as planned but it didn't take long for the relationship between Vermuyden and the Company to sour. On the 22nd November 1650, the Company sent the following letter to Sir Cornelius Vermuyden²⁵:

The Companie are very sensible how much they have suffered already by your absence from the workes, though they have hitherto said very little thereof, hopinge you would have retorned theither in some convenient tyme, but findinge you still engaged here upon a perticular busines of your owne, cannot but acquaint you with theire just resentment of this great miscarriage, and that they did instruct you with the great worke, whereupon the whole estate of many of this Company doth depend upon the confidence they had of your great abilitie in workes of this nature and they conceive there is as much neede of your being upon the workes now to see how they hold and where they are put to most stresse by theis extreme floodes as there was at first, to contrive them many great dangers by a man of art, and still upon the place may be prevented which otherwise will fall upon us, and of this wee have already woefull experience. The dam at the horseshoe wee are sure hath byn already and is againe upon theis great floodes, likely to be fatall to us which wee easily believe by some contrivement of yours might have byn removed. This yet contynues and is likely so to doe though wee believe those upon the place will bee carefull to doe what they can. Besides, the workes at Tid are of great moment to us and how theise will be performed and there is noe body to examyn whome we can relye upon in point of skill and we believe it is very considerable that you should see it before it run, there beinge so great a heade of water upon it. Upon the whole wee cannot bee possibly satisfied unles you goe forthwith downe and reside upon the workes, in default whereof wee must not onely put every miscarriage upon your accoumpt but take some other course for our future security.

On the 22nd November 1650 the Company were informed that Vermuyden gave away materials from the old sluice at Wisbech without their consent²⁶. On the 27th December, the Adventurer superintendent, Anthony Mr Hamond made a new cut to return flow through a sluice that had been dammed to ease the risk of flooding²⁷. Sir Cornelius Vermuyden immediately ordered the dam to be made up once more, the Company responding by reminding him that their Articles of Agreement required him to follow their instructions in all circumstances. They informed him that the problem was the result of his failure to make up a new channel, set down to take the flow, with sufficient width and depth, and ordered him to take down the dam once more; an order they found necessary to repeat a week later.

A few days later Vermuyden wrote to the Company to inform them that the level to the north of the Bedford River was ready for an adjudication²⁷ which, perhaps, at least in part, was a response to their complaints; an assertion that his decision and actions had been correct all along. Pressing for an

adjudication in winter when the waters were high was risky and they pointed this out in their reply, demanding once more that he *be present on the works*.

The Company's relationship with Sir Cornelius Vermuyden was improved by the success of the adjudication on the 21st March 1651 but by the 11th April it had soured once more, the Company complaining that Sir Cornelius Vermuyden had failed to heed their orders. A sub-committee was formed to consider and report on the issue²⁸.

Another major disagreement developed in the summer on 1651. The Company wanted the completion of the drainage works on the north of the Bedford River to be prioritised, putting down division dykes to mark out their land, whereas Sir Cornelius Vermuyden planned to start the major works on the southern side of the Bedford River. The Adventurers were interested in being able to profit from their land holdings whereas his interests were served by pushing the works forward as fast as possible since a delay in completing the drainage would raise costs and increase the likelihood that they would exceed the £90,000 threshold for him to pay taxes. Any delays would also hold back income from other projects such as on the Somerset Levels.

The Company first instructed Vermuyden to continue to work on the north side of the Bedford River, rather than shift workmen to the south side in May 1650²⁹ which was repeated several times in early June, the comptrollers ordered to ensure this took place²⁹. Despite the Company expressing their dissatisfaction, these orders were ignored and the works to construct the *new Owze* were pushed forward, deploying a huge army of workers that left few to work elsewhere. In July³⁰ the Company, finding their *severall orders formerly made .. have not byn observed*, again ordered that *all the workemen shall bee taken from there [the south side] save what shall bee employed on the part of the south banke which lyes nere Well and Welney*. Other workers were ordered to return to the north. They also ordered that no money would be released for work on the south side *above £500 a week*. Sir Cornelius Vermuyden wrote back to them in late August³¹, whereby *hee presseth to have the works on the south side of the Bedford River to go on*. They replied by ordering all work on the south side to stop, and that no money for such work would be issued until they completed the work on the north side³². They ordered that this should receive *vigorous procecution by all their officers employed in the Great Level of the Fennes*. The Company also found Sir Cornelius Vermuyden had been hiring workers against the rules of the Articles of Agreement³³. Bearing in mind that the work on the *new Owze* was the most significant part of the entire drainage project, it is extra-ordinary that Vermuyden organised this, deploying an army of greater than 10,000 men, against the will of the Company, at the same time defying instructions issued to their comptrollers who worked in the Fens. By October, the construction of the channel on the *new Owze* was largely complete, so Vermuyden had achieved what he had planned, against the will of the Company.

In the early October 1651 the Company claimed that many *barres, plankes and other materials were missinge and lent out and disposed of by Sir Cornelius Vermuyden for other purposes, without any leave of the Company, which have induced many workemen to leave the workes* and ordered him to return them, and, if failing to do so, they expected recompense from him³⁴. A few weeks later they reminded him that their agreement did not give him the *power of intermeddling in the puttinge out or directing the Companie payments or implying officers in reference to the overseinge or paying of any workes*³⁵. In November they ordered Vermuyden to *present or signifie to them in writing the perticuler works by him designed for the next yeare with the estimate* by mid December³⁶ to avoid a repeat of the events of the summer of 1651³⁶. This would allow them to review his plans and their costs before he could push them forward. The Company also ordered that *no worke whatsoever, nott yett begun, shall bee lett and undertaken in hand, upon any pretence what so ever*. The order was sent by a messenger to deliver it in the *fennes or into Derbyshire until he hath found out Sir Cornelius*.

In December 1651³⁷ the expenditure of the Company exceeded £90,000, above which Sir Cornelius Vermuyden was required to pay taxes on his land in the Fens; a further source of disagreement between them. In March 1652, the Company accountant, William Jessop was ordered to issue a demand for £1800 for payment of these taxes³⁸.

In 1652, the relationship appears to have improved between the Company and Sir Cornelius Vermuyden. Progress was made with the works and the final adjudication was now in sight. Perhaps Vermuyden had accepted their demands and better followed the conditions of his Articles of Agreement. The Company and Vermuyden met in Cambridge in August where he answered many of their complaints, and soon presented to them detailed costed proposals for draining the South Level⁴⁰.

In October 1652, however, another dispute arose, following the familiar pattern of conflict about who controlled the works. Vermuyden objected to⁴¹ then stopped the delivery of the cut through Marshland, also the widening of Popham's Eau. The Company viewed this as *a very great disservice to the Companies affayres*, and further declared that he was *not att all the intermeddle* with their orders. Increasingly, the Company's regard for Sir Cornelius Vermuyden's expertise and their dependency on him appears to have declined and in December 1652 they appointed a committee to review his designs before they were carried out²⁵⁹. The Company also discussed whether they should vote on the adequacy of Vermuyden's design for the South Level. Although they decided not to do, this suggests doubt about his proposals. The Company officers had been, by then, engaged with the works for over three years, during which time their expertise must have grown, whereas Vermuyden had often been absent from the Fens. Perceived mistakes by Vermuyden also undermined confidence in him. The Company wrote the Vermuyden to inform him that his actions regarding the Marshland Cut and the widening of Popham's Eau had been a *great disservice* to them and ordered him that *no stop should be made to any of the workes designed by them*. A week later they complained about him *taking it upon himself to dispose of their materials contrary to their former express orders*⁴². In February 1653 they ordered him *to goe downe into the great levell of the fennes to take care that the workes from Downham Eau bee finished to Stowbridge*; again suggesting that he was absent from the works. In March 1653, an order was made to dispose of some of Vermuyden's land because of failure to pay his taxes⁴⁴.

Vermuyden's standing was, however, improved once more at the final adjudication in Ely on 24th March 1653 at which he presented his design of the works to the Lord Commissioners. His presentation, documented in full in the minute books⁴⁵, is impressive in terms of the arguments made and detailed knowledge shown. Vermuyden was seemingly in his element there, standing in front of a packed audience of important and powerful men, describing his great works, making little mention of the contribution of others, during which time the Adventurers must have sat in the room conscious of how hard working with him had been. His final sentence of his speech says a lot about him: *I presume not to say more of the workes least I should bee accoumpted vainglorious although I might truly affirme that the present or former age have done nothinge like it for the greatt good of the nation*. Immediately after the adjudication, the Company ordered that Vermuyden be continued as Director of Works⁴⁵. He also began to attend the Company's meetings in London regularly for the first time.

The final dispute between Sir Cornelius Vermuyden and the Company was caused by his failure to pay his taxes on the land transferred to him after the final adjudication as well as on other land holdings. It is unclear whether he was unable to make the payments or, having delivered such great rewards to the Company, resented them. As part of the resolution of differences with Robert Henley, arbitrated by John Fountayne in January 1654⁴⁶, his tax debt was offset by the land owed to him by Mr Henley. Taking account of other details in the Articles or Agreement, it was determined that he owed the Company £1894 but this was waived on the condition that for the next 5 years he would give his advice, direction and assistance.

Sir Cornelius Vermuyden requested a general meeting on the 24th April to present a paper on the state of drainage of the South and Middle Level⁴⁷ but when the day of the meeting came, he failed to attend. On the 8th May, the Company ordered him to meet to discuss the paper but no such meeting is recorded in the minute books to have taken place.

In July 1654, Lord Oliver St John overturned the management of the Company, which led to the replacement of many of the Company officers and, after this, Sir Cornelius Vermuyden's name does not appear in the minute books, neither as an attendee of the meetings nor in reference to his work in the Fens. Although providing advice was a condition of waiving his debt, there is no indication that his advice was sought or given, and in October 1654, the Company enforced the debt of £1894⁴⁸. In July 1655, they sought advice from another Dutchman, Barain Westerdike⁴⁹.

Sir Cornelius Vermuyden appears in the minute books one last time in February 1656 when he attended a meeting to sell the defaulter lands of landowners who had failed to pay their taxes. All his remaining lands were sold for the sum of £627⁵⁰. All lands held by his son Cornelius Vermuyden were likewise sold. The meeting was attended by most of the Adventurers, many of whom he had infuriated over the previous few years.

Sir Cornelius Vermuyden remains the central figure in the drainage of the Fens. Whereas all others are largely forgotten, his name is still well known. His reputation suffered after his departure from the Company, partly because of the 'bad blood' that was left from his various disputes with them but also because of perceived failings of his design, although these were more to do with lack of scientific knowledge at the time, about peat wastage and the silting of rivers, rather than faults in his part. His design has, in fact, stood the test of time remarkably well, and almost all of his works continue to be used to this day. Undoubtedly, Vermuyden was an abrasive personality who left behind him few friends but perhaps such a single minded, driven individual was required to force through a project of such vast scale.

After he left the Company, several other of his initiatives were unsuccessful and he failed to gain support for the drainage of Sedgemoor and Malvern Chase. He died in London in 1677.

Robert Burton

Robert Burton of Spalding in Lincolnshire was appointed as principal overseer of the works on the 23rd August 1649⁵¹ with a salary of £100 per annum⁵², and later a meeting took place in Wisbech⁵² in March 1650 with Sir Cornelius Vermuyden, Colonel Underwood and Mr Claphorne to begin to plan the works. Burton's role was to oversee the management of the workforce⁵³, including hiring and firing, as well as sourcing and distributing the materials to deliver Sir Cornelius Vermuyden's design. Burton was also tasked with dealing with problems related to land cut by the works, securing land purchases and arranging compensation to those harmed. The complexity of the project across such a huge area of land must have made his job very demanding and Anthony Hamond requested a gratuity for him for his *great care and paynes in the workes* in September 1650⁵⁴.

An ongoing issue that arose with Robert Burton was the scrutiny of the numerous contracts that he arranged, the Company asking him on several occasions to send them certificates and vouchers⁵⁵. The Adventurers' efforts to maintain control of their complex project in such remote places, so far from London, is a constant theme of the minute books and Robert Burton was often the centre of these efforts. His reputation, however, remained good with the Company and in March 1651 his allowances were increased⁵⁷. The Company also made orders directly to Burton in relation to their dispute with Sir

Cornelius Vermuyden about moving the workmen to the north of the Bedford River in the summer of 1651⁵⁸, bypassing their Director of Works (see **Sir Cornelius Vermuyden**).

As expenditure on the works spiralled, however, the Company began to examine Burton's work in more detail in the effort to cut costs, which eventually resulted in them complaining that he let out the works at too high a rate. In October 1651, John Thurloe, on his return from the Fens, accused Burton, amongst others, of letting out the works at excessive rates⁵⁹ and in November suggested Burton was engaged in *clandestyne bargaines with his favourites*⁶⁰, inferring that Burton was taking 'back handers' for letting out the works. The Company dismissed several overseers but, despite these concerns, Burton, in his key role, was kept on. Another related issue was that Burton had arranged work on the *backefloores* of the *new Owze* without a proper contract, the takers (intermediaries who gathered gangs of workers for hire by the Company much like modern 'gang lords') then demanding payment at verbally agreed rates. This infuriated the Company because they perceived the takers took an excessive cut of their money⁶¹. The Company suggested the workers should be told that *the takers are men who abuse them, making the Companie paie excessive rates which those takers put in their purses*. The Company considered not paying the takers or the workers for the *backefloores* but knew this would result in mutiny and they agreed that *help should be sought from the army for soldiers to be sent from Kings Lynn*.

In January 1652, the Company accused the takers *eyther by craft or rather by collusion with Burton, have made bargaines of great advantage to themselves and losse to the Companie* on Vermuydens Eau and other works⁶². The Company addressed this problem by giving others rights to let out work alongside Burton⁶³ (Jonas Moore and Mr Palmer) but then, in March, the Company ordered Burton's employment as principal overseer of the works to cease, to be replaced by Edmund Welsh⁶⁴. In April 1652, however, Burton was retained as an employee when several others were released⁶⁵, and in May the Company ordered the comptrollers to discuss what terms Burton would accept to continue to serve them at a lower salary⁶⁶.

Burton continued to work for the Company; unlike others who were dismissed, his skills must have remained useful to them. In August 1652, he let out work *now exceeding his authority* but they let this pass⁶⁷.

On the 23rd March 1653 the minutes refer to Burton as dead⁶⁸.

Robert Burton's story reveals how hard it was for the Company, so distant from the Fens, to control the drainage works and their costs. A handful of overworked Company officers had to deal with armies of labourers, usually in remote locations. Mismanagement and corruption were inevitable in these circumstances, but this was difficult for the Company to tolerate when their costs were running out of control. A competent principle overseer was crucial to the Company to convert Sir Cornelius Vermuyden's designs into actual banks and drains. The rapid progress of the drainage works in 1651 suggests that, despite later accusations of corruption, Burton was able in this work.

Jonas Moore

Jonas Moore was the Company of Adventurers' principal surveyor during most of the 2nd Undertaking. He led a small team of surveyors who measured out the Adventurers lands; division dikes that marked their boundaries, as well as the dimensions and course of the new drains, banks and roads. He also carried out surveys after the works were finished to ensure they had been done as planned, as well as creating the many maps required by the Company to plan their work and show to others.

Moore's name may have been first mentioned in June 1649 as *an artist that offers to draw a mappe of the levell* for £10⁶⁹. The Company decided, however, to offer the job of principal surveyor to Benjamin Hare from Hertfordshire but, after writing to him and sending a messenger to locate him, Hare could not be found⁷⁰. Jonas Moore was offered the job in August 1650 with a salary of £150 per annum (increased in September to £200, provided he was able to make a prompt start⁷¹), thereby becoming the Company's most highly paid officer. All maps held by the Company were handed to him and Mr Palmer was made his assistant⁷². Under the instruction of John Thurloe and John Latch, Moore was required to provide maps of the north side of the level to *show all of the works so far carried out* in the 1st and 2nd undertakings, as well as the *severall rivers, meeres and rivuletts* and the location of the Adventurers lands, to be ready by the 10th of March 1651⁷³. Thurloe ordered him to immediately go down to the Great Level to complete the assignment. In only 4 months he was required to create a map of a vast area of land, many parts of which were difficult to access at a time of year when the Fens were at their most cold and wet. To complete the work, he must have been reliant on pre-existing maps but also to travel great distances by boat and horse in conditions that must have been unfamiliar to him since he had long been based in London.



Picture 7 Jonas Moore

On the 26th March, Moore was ordered by the Company to inform the towns and nearby lands in the Fens that he would survey the plots of Adventurers lands *with stakes and holes as well as the brooks and rills*; also to allow the landowners to arrange their own surveys to ensure the land divisions were marked out correctly⁷⁴. The accuracy of these surveys was clearly important because, otherwise, they would result in subsequent dispute, but achieving such accuracy in such a wild open country, with few pre-existing reference points, must have been extremely challenging. Even walking through wet, deep peat, regularly encountering treacherous ground must have been exhausting and slowed progress. In December 1651, he was provided with the assistance of 4 Scottish prisoners of war to help in *rowing and carryinge chayne and other imployment in order to surveying of the Fennes*⁷⁵.

A negative reaction from local people to these small parties of surveyors, marking out long held common land was inevitable and this is inferred in a letter of April 1651⁷⁶ in which Mr Moore is asked to send up names and places of abode of any who make *styrre or tumult*.

Moore was ordered to witness the *scowring of the mayne drains* and *attend the dividing of the Adventurers proportions from the Country* which must have demanded a lot of his time on top of his mapping work. In February 1652, he was given the further task of measuring the *meares, lakes and pooles* to allow them to be taken out of the Adventurers land, as well as marking out other land to replace these areas, a challenging task even without his other commitments⁷⁸. Jonas Moore also played a key role in resolving disputes with the locals about land that had been cut by the works; checking the truth of their concerns and measuring how much land was harmed to determine compensation⁷⁷.

The importance of Moore's work to the Company is indicated by their response to his coming up to London in November 1651 on urgent family business; ordering him not to do it again without notice, and immediately to return to avoid further *ill consequence*⁷⁹. In December 1652 he was allowed to come up to arrange to bring his family and children down to the Fens to live in a house in March.

As the drainage works progressed and the Adventurers looked to take up their land, the demands on Moore and his small team grew, during a time when marking out of highways⁸⁰ became a further major element of his work. In September 1652, however, this workload did not stop the Company transferring to Moore the management of the Marshland cut and other works in the North Level when Mr Parsons, the previous manager grew ill and died. Moore was also asked to manage the repairs on the north bank of the Bedford River when another officer, Mr Drewry, fell ill⁸². His advice was also sought in December 1652 to review the work of Sir Cornelius Vermuyden on the south side of the Bedford River and determine its sufficiency⁸³. Moore was also requested to take part in negotiations with a number of towns to settle their complaints⁸⁴ and was heavily involved in the preparations for the final adjudication in March 1653. In addition to preparing maps and certificates, this assignment included helping to find accommodation for the Commissioners in Ely⁸⁵.

After the final adjudication In 1653, Moore and his team appear to have been even more overloaded with requests to make out the Adventurers' lands. Unrealistic timescales were imposed on them and complaints were made about their slow response⁸⁶. In May 1653, the minutes mention that Mr Evans, one of Jonas Moore's surveyors, was lately fallen *sicke and disabled*, perhaps related to this extreme workload⁸⁷.

After 1653, Moores' workload appears to have grown less but he was still required to help respond to John Maynard's petition against the works in December 1653⁸⁸, then the Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell's demands about a plot of his own land⁸⁹ (see **Oliver Cromwell**). His general survey work is further mentioned in October 1654, alongside a list of banks and drains sent to Commissary General Whalley that required repair⁹⁰.

Moore's work continued with the Company and, eventually, he had time to complete his great map of the Great Level⁹¹ that can now be seen in the National Archives at Kew in London.

Jonas Moore made a huge contribution to the delivery of the drainage works. Without accurate land surveys and measurements before and after their completion, they could not have been delivered successfully. Moore was clearly a very competent and dedicated man, at times taking on an enormous workload that required him to constantly move around the Fens. Unlike almost all the other officers, he managed to do this without any serious criticism from the Adventurers, which suggests how highly they regarded him. For example, a letter from the Adventurer, Anthony Hamond, describes Moore as a *fayre character with diligence and good deportement*⁹².

Moore's service with the Company continued until 1656. He died in 1679.

Christianne Derikson

Christianne Derikson was responsible for building many of the great sluices, sasses and bridges that formed part of the works. Derikson is first mentioned in December 1649, described as the keeper of the sluice at Wisbech, being informed that he was required to repair and *hang upp the doore that is broken downe*⁹³. In July 1650, he was charged with making the sasse on the River Ouse, and sluices and sasses at Salters Lode for the cost of £3240⁹⁴. Derikson advised the Company to request an adjudication of the north side of the Bedford River *after the coming winter because he could not complete the sluices and*

*sasses on the Owze before then*⁹⁵. In November of the same year, he was required to remove the old clay hill that formed part of the old Horseshoe Sluice at Wisbech⁹⁶ and in February 1651 there is reference to Derikson's contract for large pieces of timber, presumably to be used to build sluices and bridges⁹⁷. In July 1651 he agreed to make two bridges at Sawtry⁹⁸.

The great new sasse on the *new Owze* at the Hermitage was a key structure that had to be finished before the river could run. Although this was close to completion in November 1651, Derikson was accused of delaying his own work to prejudice the work of another engineer, Glassonne, who was working on the nearby dam, and £500 had to be held back to force him to complete his work⁹⁹. The Company were also concerned that he had received the major part of his fee without proof of how well the work had been carried out and appointed a workman to report back on the state of the work¹⁰⁰. In November 1651, the Company hoped *the bargaine with Christianne of the settinge the sluices by the first of August will cause him to use double dilligence, seeing his neglecte and default have turned to much to the Companies prejudice*¹⁰¹. Derikson was therefore added to the Company's general dismay with its workforce.

During 1652 and 1653, further work was carried out by Derikson on two tunnels¹⁰² and a sasse at Crowland¹⁰³. In December 1653, Derikson issued a petition to demand an unpaid fee of £212 but because the work was incomplete they only offered him £12¹⁰⁴.

Although little is known about the lives of master craftsmen and engineers such as Christianne Derikson, their expertise was key to the success of the project.

William Jessop

William Jessop was the Company's *receptor*, taking payments of taxes and other income. He worked alongside Colonel Francis Underwood, the *expeditor*, who issued money out. Jessop also acted as the principal accountant and auditor for the Company, and played a key role in checking contracts and financial records from the works.

On several occasions Jessop was sent down to the Fens to audit the finances. His first visit was planned in January 1651¹⁰⁵ and he was tasked¹⁰⁶ with checking on *spade work* for the *making of banckes, rivers, dreyne, sluice pitts and dams either under contracts or day rates, plus the contracts and payments for sluices and overtoes, and procuring materials such as wheelbarrows, planks and timber*. He also audited salaries and purchases of land. In particular, he was asked to look into the accounts of the contracts held by Mr Burton and the overseers he employed and examined the certificates and vouchers returned to him on completion of their work. This was to be compared to the original design and instructions from Sir Cornelius Vermuyden. Likewise, he audited the *expeditor*, Francis Underwood's accounts¹⁰⁶. Jessop was authorised to call on anyone who had received money from the Company¹⁰⁸. He returned to London from Wisbech to issue his findings in February 1651 and reported that the accounting methods used by the Company were *very unsafe*, particularly in relation to materials and the payment of their overseers¹⁰⁹. Jessop's salary was increased from £100 to £200 after he completed this task, from which he was to pay his assistants¹¹⁰.

In April, Jessop proposed new accounting methods for the works¹¹¹ and a further audit was planned in September 1651 but this had to be postponed because of his wife's sickness¹¹². Eventually, the visit took place in December 1651, this time in Kings Lynn, for which he was paid an additional £80¹¹⁴. His reports after these visits revealed many cases of poor record keeping and misuse of funds which the Company then investigated further and sought to redress; essential steps in keeping control of costs which were running well above budget. During his visit to Kings Lynn, Jessop was also appointed to arbitrate on the business of the *backflores*¹¹⁸ (see **Corruption**).

Jessop reported that the expenditure on the works had exceeded £90000 in February 1652, the threshold above which Sir Cornelius Vermuyden was to pay tax¹¹³. He also reported on irregularities in the issuing of materials by John Hatton and Robert Pinchbeck in February 1653¹¹⁵. In March, he accompanied the Company at the final adjudication *to issue out all such sum and sums of mony as are needful to bee expended*¹¹⁶, following a similar trip to the earlier adjudication of the land north of Bedford River¹¹⁷ in 1651.

In 1652, William Jessop became a purchaser of Adventurers lands¹¹⁹ in the 18th lot and, subsequently attended several meetings as an Adventurer. Jessop was replaced by George Dalton as receiver in 1654 but he continued in his accounting and auditing role for the remaining period of the minute books.

Anthony Hamond

A Participant in the 1st Undertaking and owner of a large estate of Adventurers lands², Anthony Hamond played a key role in the delivery of the drainage of the Great Level, being the Adventurer most present on the drainage works during the period of the minute books. In December 1649¹²⁰ he was ordered to become resident in the Fens - *constantly upon the workes and to husband the same* - but remained in London until May when, alongside John Latch, he was *authorised, to goe downe to the workes in the great levell of the fennes and bee resident there to take care that the contractors for the workes and land to bee purchased for the same and the clarke comptroller, surveyour and overseers of the said workes and all other inferiour officers performe their severall offices and trusts for the best advantage of the Companye and they, or eyther of them, shall have power to examyn the bargaines and contracts for lands to bee purchased, materialls to be bought and workes to be made and all thinges concerninge the same*. Hamond received £20 per month for his residency¹²¹ and took on sole responsibility for comptrol in October 1650; *able to manage to whole busines*¹³².

Often, communications between the Company and the Fens, during much of the 2nd Undertaking were via Hamond and, overall, he is probably the most mentioned of the Adventurers in the minute books. The Company often turned to him if they required information on the works and it was to him that they issued instructions. The impression gained from the minute books is that he was unassuming, competent and diligent.

In addition to supervision of the works, he was given the task of sorting out problems and talking to estates and towns in the Fens, for example in relation to lands cut through by the works¹²⁴. He was also responsible for the employment of many of the Company officers, and likewise their release from employment¹²⁵. Hamond also played a key role in organising the Company's response to disturbances and riots by opponents of the drainage works¹²²; notable the riots in Swaffham in 1653¹²⁷, liaising with local justices of the peace¹²³ and the army¹²⁸ to help quell the disturbances.

The only serious criticism of Hamond by the Company came after he presented a cost of £2500 for the drainage works on the south level which subsequently proved to be unrealistic and for allowing these works to proceed when the sum was exceeded²⁶¹.

In January 1653, he was appointed as conservator of the south side of the Bedford River with a salary of £150¹²⁹ but after Oliver St John overturned the management of the Company in August 1654 (see **Oliver St John**), he was replaced by Commissary General Whalley. Eventually, in March 1655, he was appointed Whalley's deputy¹³⁰.

During times when Anthony Hamond was not in the Fens, he was a regular attendee at the Company's meetings. He continued to work for the Company until 1659 and died in 1661².

John Latch

The Adventurer and lawyer, John Latch, was actively involved in the Company's business throughout the period of the minute books. In January 1650¹³¹, Latch was authorised to be resident on the works as comptroller alongside Anthony Hamond, at a salary of £20 per month and continued until Hamond was given sole responsibility for this role in October 1650. Latch was appointed again as comptroller in April 1651 and, apart from short periods in London and elsewhere, continued in this role until 1653 when he grew sick¹³³.

Latch also represented the Company in legal matters as a solicitor and was regularly paid to be retained in Council¹³⁴, whilst also being active in buying and selling Adventurers lands.

On the 27th December 1650¹³⁶, an issue came to light related to John Latch's involvement in the 1st Undertaking during the time when Charles 1's led the works and he was the Company's *receivor* and *expenditor*. In February 1641, he received a warrant from the King to go overseas. On his return in December 1647, a sealed document signed by him revealed that he was still in debt to a large group of workmen - *indebted (as was alledged) unto diverse workemen and others for, and concerninge, the late workes of dreyninge the great levell; £4500.11.10 or there abouts, wyther to the workemen or for the materialls or workes done which Mr Latch thought reasonable but thought hee should bee strictured in point of tyme, so that wee must leave it wholly to the Companie what they thinke fitt to doe in the busines*. Latch had given security for this payment in 1641. He also owed Robert Henley £620 for materials sold by warrant from the Earl of Bedford. In addition, he owed £2025 for 9 unpaid taxes on 3600 acres in the 1st lot. Latch acknowledged his debt and agreed to sell 3600 acres of land to raise the money to pay the workmen¹³⁷.

In July 1651, a petition was delivered to the Company on behalf of the workmen¹³⁸ for the payment of £5000 to them by Mr Latch. Sir Cornelius Vermuyden and Colonel Francis Underwood agreed to secure the debt, indemnify the Company and ensure that it was paid. The long standing debt was related to the raising of the bank of Moreton's Leam from Stanground to Guyhurn and the opening of the river at Wisbech, and the petition describes the consequences of the failure to pay the workmen; the *utter ruyine of some of the petioners, their wives and families, many of whom having byn imprisoned and forced to flee theire howses and stock*, listing the names of 85 of the workmen harmed¹³⁹. The petitioners had agreed to delay these proceedings until the Acte of Drainage was passed in 1649 on the understanding that they would be given satisfaction afterwards. The petition states that Latch *then expenditor for the said worke, having great summes of money in his hands for payment of the petitioners, absented himself and deteyned the money*.

The Company agreed that Latch would transfer 1800 acres in the 1st lot to the petitioners to clear his debt. The remaining land would be sold to cover his unpaid taxes to the Company if he was unable to make payment before September¹⁴⁰. Latch sold the 1800 acres to Sir Cornelius Vermuyden for £4500 who agreed to pass on this money to the workmen (or to the Company if he failed to do so by Michelmas). For security, Vermuyden agreed to make available 1800 acres in the 5th lot which they would hold if he failed to pay them¹⁴². Latch was unable to pay the taxes and his remaining 1800 acres were sold.

This episode of Latch's unpaid debt does not seem to have harmed his position in the Company and in March 1652 he was part of a small committee charged with planning the future management of the

Company¹⁴³. Only four months later in November, Latch bought several other parcels of land so was clearly not ruined by paying off his debt¹⁴⁴.

In June 1652 the Company disapproved of Latch when contracts were let out on the south side of Bedford River against their agreed budget; and consequently the Company's agents were brought *into perill of their lives for not payinge workemen*¹⁴⁵. The workmen *raised the rumour that Latch and Mr Drewry were the causes of it* and Latch was *withdrawn from the imployment, by reason thereof* and comptrol was passed to Mr Drewry and Mr Parsons¹⁴⁶, but by October he was working as comptroller for the Company once more¹⁴⁷ until he became sick in March 1653¹⁴⁸. He continued to attend Company meetings in London and undertake committee and legal work for them until he died in 1657.

Oliver St John



Picture 8 Oliver St John

Oliver St John was perhaps the most powerful of the Adventurers in terms of the politics of Commonwealth England, as Lord Chief Justice and Member of the Council of State. He also played a central role in drafting the 1649 Drainage Act. Although he attended few meetings, the Company often requested his advice, particularly when the drainage project touched on State matters or when his political influence might be helpful to them.

Oliver St John was heavily involved in the first few weeks of the Company in the summer of 1649 as well as the contractual discussions with Sir Cornelius Vermuyden¹⁴⁹ who suggested St John act as a referee to resolve their differences¹⁵¹. In June 1649, St John advised the Company about the legal status of the 12000 acres of land that the Act transferred to the late King Charles; determining that the land was *in the hands of the Adventurers and Participants*.

In March 1651 the Company requested his presence at the adjudication of the north level and also to talk to Sir Cornelius Vermuyden as the person *most likely to control him and prevent him causing damage to the Company*¹⁵² and in September 1651, he was consulted about how the Company should respond to malicious damage of the Company's banks. Oliver St John also appears to have played a role in the transfer of Scottish prisoners of war to the Company, taking advantage of his position in the Council of State and, later he was given the power to select 20 of the prisoners to be his servants¹⁵⁴.

The Company again sought his advice in relation to taxation of the Adventurers lands by the Commonwealth in September 1652¹⁵⁵ then about the final adjudication in March 1653 and he was part of the committee that made preparations for the adjudication. In March 1653 the Company consulted him about the transfer of Dutch prisoners of war¹⁵⁷.

In June 1654 the Company received a letter from Oliver St John stating that he was *very dysatisfyed* with the Company's business and demanded a meeting with them¹⁵⁸. The Company at first asked for this to be delayed until a meeting in Ely in August because most of them were out of town¹⁵⁹. The meeting with St John, however, promptly took place on the 15th July in Oliver St John's chamber in Lincolns Inn¹⁶⁰ at which St John ordered a review of the state of the Company, along with an independent examination of the

works, naming Mr Barber and Mr Life to visit the Fens on the south side of Bedford River, and Captain Whitstone, Lieutenant Raymond and Mr Thomas Woodfall to visit the north side. At subsequent management meetings in August¹⁶², the Company's finances were reviewed and the existing management processes 'torn up'; the level now separated into three parts, the North, Middle and South level. The Earl of Bedford managed the North Level, Commissary General Whalley the South Level and Oliver St John himself was put in charge of the Middle Level. A detailed plan was then drawn up of the works to be carried out. The reason for this dramatic intervention is unclear but presumably related to reports that St John had received about the management and finances of the works. These sudden changes show how powerful St John was; prior to the events there is no indication of any concerns, and he faced no recorded opposition to proposed changes that meant many of the Adventurers lost their roles. Although the role of Sir Cornelius Vermuyden was not mentioned in these exchanges, this event seems to have marked the ending of his active engagement with the Company.

From October 1654 to early 1656, many of the Company meetings were at St John's chambers in Lincoln's Inn, indicating his active engagement with the Company's affairs at this time and in March 1655 he was asked to review all of the works on the South Level, along with Richard Gorges and Anthony Hamond¹⁶³. In May 1655 Oliver St John was asked to ask as be conservator of the South Level¹⁶⁴ in addition to the Middle Level that he already held, but he turned this down. He attended many Company meetings during this period, having retired from the Council of State in 1653. He died in 1673.

John Thurloe



Picture 9 John Thurloe

At the beginning of the period of the minute books in 1649, John Thurloe attended Company meetings as an associate of Oliver St John with whom he had a long standing relationship; St John sponsoring his legal training and employing him as his personal assistant and agent in the 1640s. By 1656, Thurloe was Secretary of State and Oliver Cromwell's spymaster; one of the most powerful men in England. During Cromwell's final years, Thurloe was one of his closest aids; the Lord Protector listened to him perhaps more than any other man in England. Thurloe was regarded by Cromwell as a great organiser; someone with a fine mind; qualities his engagement with the Adventurers may well have helped to hone.

In November 1650, Thurloe invested in the several defaulter lands¹⁶⁵ and in February 1650 helped organize the sale of the late King's Adventurers¹⁶⁶ land, becoming one of the purchasers¹⁶⁷. After this, he quickly became active on many of the Company's committees and represented them in discussions with the Earl of Exeter about disturbances on his land¹⁶⁸. Thurloe also became an officer of the Company's treasury and represented the Company's interests in Wisbech, where he had an estate¹⁶⁹.

Thurloe was active in improving how the Company was managed and exposing bad practice and corruption, sending William Jessop down to the Fens to audit the accounts¹⁰⁵ in December 1650. In July 1651¹⁷¹ he was sent down to the level to work alongside Anthony Hamond in managing the works and in

July was given the task of reviewing the Company's contracts, particularly those issued by Robert Burton. On his return¹⁷³ he reported *severall miscarriages had happened in their affayres* including mismanagement of contracts by Burton. The Company offered him thanks for this service and *great paynes and care he hath taken in their affayres*. His reports resulted in the dismissal of many overseers.

Thurloe was involved in the Company's response to disturbances by local people of the Fens¹⁷⁴, including the cutting of turf on Adventurer's lands and met with the army to ensure troops were deployed to quell resistance to the works. He was also involved in the dispute with John Latch regarding the 1st lot (see **John Latch**) and, later, with Valentine Walton about his authorisation of the cutting of one of the Adventurers drains near Crowland (see **Valentine Walton and Crowland**)¹⁷⁵. Thurloe also led on the talks with the army about taxation of the Company by the Commonwealth¹⁷⁶.

As Thurloe's other commitments increased, he became less involved in Company business, although in 1653 acted on behalf of Oliver Cromwell in relation to his claim on 200 acres of land near Ramsey¹⁷⁷ (see **Oliver Cromwell**) as well as being involved in the deployment of Dutch prisoners of war to the Fens¹⁷⁸, on both cases acting on the interests of his political masters on London. In December 1654, he gave up his role as one of the Company treasurers, *findinge his employment so great* and was given a gratuity of £100 on his departure¹⁷⁹. Thurloe continued to act as a contact with Wisbech, also supporting Oliver St John in his intervention in the management of the Company in 1654 (see **Oliver St John**).

After the fall of the Commonwealth, much of Thurloe's estate was dissolved. In contrast to other close associates of Cromwell, he survived the restoration and retired into obscurity before he died in 1668.

Walter St John

Walter St John became a purchaser of Adventurers' land in February 1651¹⁸⁰; subsequently attending Company meetings in July 1651¹⁸¹. He later purchased several parcels of land owned by Oliver St John¹⁸², buying many more plots of defaulters land in the same year. St John was first sent into the level to help manage the works around Popham's Eau and the new Marshland Cut in October 1653¹⁸³. He was then asked to review the work required on the north and south sides of the Bedford River and reported that the works has been *prosecuted with lesse effecte then the exigence of their affayres required*¹⁸⁴. The Companie responded by *expressing their confidence in his work* and asked him to *contynue your offer to make care of their interest untill the workes now in hand on the north side bee perfected*¹⁸⁵. After returning from the Fens, the Company found that *the workemen and overseers in the Great Levell of the Fennes have byn very negligent and remisse in performinge their respective services ever since Mr St John's retorne from there and, thereupon, they finde not that fruite and effect of the works as justly they might expecte they doe, therefore hereby thinke fitt and order that Mr St John bee desired to dispose of his occasions as to bee pleased to take another journey into the levell to see the workes effectually prosecuted*¹⁸⁶. In January 1653, they expressed their thanks to him further by presenting him with a dozen silver plates¹⁸⁷, after which they repeated their request¹⁸⁸ until he agreed to return to manage the works in the Fens in February 1653¹⁸⁹. His employment continued for the next year but after Oliver St John's intervention in the management of the Company in August 1654, Walter St John is mentioned less often; mainly as an attendee of the meetings in London so his supervision of work in the Fens seems not to have continued.

Robert Henley



Picture 10 Robert Henley

Robert Henley, a wealthy businessman with land interests across the country², was perhaps the most influential of the Adventurers who did not go down to the level to manage the works. Unlike most of the Adventurers, he supported the Royalist side in the civil war and provided funds to the king for which he was later fined by Parliament. Henley offered his house for the Adventurers meetings and most took place there. The Company's papers were held at the house and taxes and other income were sent there. Henley was also one of the 4 trustees of the drainage works (alongside the Earl of Bedford, Edward Russell and Robert Castell). Henley appears to have been well connected and played a key role in bringing forward the Act of Drainage in 1649¹⁹⁸. Throughout, he was supported by his sons, Andrew and Robert.

Henley became Company treasurer in June 1649¹⁹⁰ (delayed to July because of other commitments¹⁹¹).

Henley was a supporter of Sir Cornelius Vermuyden during the negotiations to appoint a Director of Works in 1649 and, in order to broker a deal *offered to the Company that if Sir Cornelius Vermuyden be director of the works hee will engage 4000 acres which hee hath already and 4000 acres more which hee hath and will purchase*¹⁹³ for which the Company offered Henley the recompense of £10000. He also offered to pay the taxes on this land¹⁹⁴. Henley was one of only two Adventurers who voted for Vermuyden when the role of Director of Works was contested with Sir Edward Partherich in December 1649¹⁹⁵.

Although important, Henley's contribution to Company affairs was largely uneventful, performing the role of treasurer and being involved in many land transactions. He attended by far the most Company meetings of any of the Adventurers during the period of the minute books (79%, the next highest being John Latch at 47 % - see Appendix 1). Henley's land deal that formed part of the Company's agreement with Sir Cornelius Vermuyden soon, however, became a bitter dispute.

In response to Henley's demand for £10000 from the Company that formed part of the deal, the Company proposed that 3000 acres (later amended to 2500 acres) be offered instead¹⁹⁶ (different opinions were expressed whether Henley should pay taxes on the land to be transferred to Vermuyden¹⁹⁷). In June 1651 1000 acres in *Byall Fenne*, 937 acres in *Woodwalton Comon* and 100 acres in *Higney growndes* were transferred to Henley plus more 436 acres in *Holme Fenne* as part of these arrangements, whilst further debts of £898 were identified to be held by Henley from the 1st Undertaking¹⁹⁸. The situation was complicated further when the expenditure of the Company exceeded the threshold above which Vermuyden was required to pay tax²⁰⁰.

Because neither Vermuyden or Henley had paid all their taxes owed to the Company, it was proposed to sell Henley's 2500 acres, along with Vermuyden's land in the 5th lot that had been transferred from Henley as part of the Articles of Agreement in April 1653, although this was dependent on resolution of

Vermuyden's tax bill which was to be independently determined by Lord Commissioners Whitlocke and General Harrison²⁰¹. In December 1653, however, it became clear to the Company that this issue continued to be unresolved and that they were still owed their taxes²⁰². The Company ordered that unless the difference regarding the 5th lot were resolved, they would sell the land in default of taxes.

Ultimately, the parties agreed in January 1654 that the Adventurer, John Fountayne, should be the independent arbitrator of the dispute²⁰³, reporting his decision on the 31st January 1654²⁰⁴. Fountayne proposed that Henley be responsible for the taxes before the final adjudication in May 1653 and Vermuyden should be responsible after this date; a finding that was against Henley's wishes and resulted in him owing £934 to the Company. The Company also required him to convey large areas of land back to the Company, (500 acres in *Byall Fenn*, 937 acres in *Woodwalton Comon*, 100 acres in *Higney growndes* and 963 acres in *Holme Fenn*). In addition, other money was owed to the Company by Henley for unpaid taxes, amounting in total to £3419 against £300 owed to him by the Company. Unlike the other parties subject to Fountayne's arbitration, Henley refused these terms²⁰⁵. Shortly after this, the meetings of the Adventurers ceased to take place at Mr Henley's house which may well have been a consequence of this outcome, although he continued to attend Company meetings and they resumed at his house in March 1655.

Mr Henley died in early 1656 (he was referred to as deceased in February²⁰⁶) and the Company sent Mr Gorges and Mr Crane to attend the funeral out of *theire affection and respects which they bare to him in his life tyme as hee was a member of the Company*²⁰⁷.

The Earl of Bedford



Picture 11 William Russell, Earl of Bedford

William Russell, the Earl of Bedford, led the Company of Adventurers, also acting as one of the 4 trustees to the Act of Drainage, and throughout the minute books he is referred to with high esteem. Although attending many meetings, he rarely had an active role in the management of the Company and received few actions. The main exceptions was the role of conservator of the North Level in August 1654²⁰⁸ that he took on following Oliver St John's intervention in the management of the Company; later complaining that the North Level was underfunded compared to the other areas²⁰⁹. In general, however, Bedford preferred to act as chairman, leaving the details to others, exerting his influence behind the scenes. For example, in March 1651 the Company wrote to him asking him to exert his influence over Sir Cornelius Vermuyden, expressing the view that Bedford had the greatest power to control him²¹⁰. Throughout the period, he retained the whole 4000 acres of the 20th Lot and did not become involved in any other land transactions.

Others

Brief accounts of the roles of other important members and officers of the Company are given below:

Name	Role
Francis Underwood	Francis Underwood acted as <i>expenditor</i> to the Company from 1649 to 1653, paying out the Company's money for various contracts and services. Although generally highly regarded, Underwood expressed his wish to leave the role in 1650 ²¹¹ and in 1652 <i>signified to the Company that his employment was of great charge and yet founde that it did not give the Companie satisfaction</i> ²¹² . The resignation was not accepted by the Company. Underwood was awarded £300 after the final adjudication ²¹³ then, finally resigned in 1653. He had an estate at Whittlesea, south of Peterborough.
Richard Gorges	Richard Gorges was an active member of the Company throughout the period of the minute books, serving on many of the Company's committees and was involved in many land transactions. In March 1653 he was given <i>oversight of severall workes on the North side of Bedford River</i> , alongside Major Alexander Blake ²¹⁴ . He also undertook a survey of the North Level with Blake in April 1653 for which he was paid £12 ²¹⁵ . In June 1654, Gorges was offered the role of Conservator of the Middle Level but refused (<i>his occasions would not permit him to attend the service</i>) ²¹⁵ .
Robert Castell	Robert Castell, based in Cambridge, was one of the 4 trustees of the Act of Drainage. He was an active member of the Company, involved in many committees and often <i>engaged in Company business in the Fens</i> ²¹⁸ (Castell's estate was in East Hatley in Cambridgeshire). Castell arranged Mr Burton's appointment as principal overseer ²¹⁶ and was offered the role of comptroller in June 1649 but <i>first desired satisfaction concerning the officers to bee employed under him before he give a further answer unto</i> . In January 1651 he represented the interests of the <i>poore people</i> of Glatton and Holme to the Company and in May 1653 was ordered to take into his care the repairs on the north bank of the Bedford River. In June 1654 he was praised by the Company for his negotiations with the towns of Cottenham, Waterbeach and Willingham at time when opposition to the works was running high, granting the commoners long term leases on the land ²²⁰ .
George Dalton	George Dalton became joint <i>receivor</i> and <i>expenditor</i> of the Company in May 1653 ²²¹ , after serving under William Jessop since 1641. Prior to his taking on these roles he was involved in several purchases of land in 1652 and 1653, and his house in Ely was later used for Company business.
John Trenchard	John Trenchard was an active member of the Company throughout the period of the minute books, regularly attending meetings and serving on many of the Company's committees. He was also involved in several land transactions, including the purchase of land from Robert Henley in the 5 th lot which resulted in him becoming involved in the dispute between Henley and Sir Cornelius Vermuyden ²²² . Trenchard was actively involved in the selection and deployment of Scottish prisoners of war to the level, and in May 1656, he was involved in discussions about the use of Robert Henley's house after his death.
John Kelsey	John Kelsey was appointed overseer of the Scottish prisoners of war in October 1651 for a salary of ten shillings six pence a week ²²⁴ . Kelsey was responsible for managing their work, preventing them from running away and keeping a list of any on them were sick, run away or were dead, to be issued the Council of State each month ²²⁵ . The Company were very pleased with his work at first, <i>describing him as carpenter, engineer and a diligent and ingenious man</i> in November 1651 ²²⁶ , although they became less pleased when many prisoners escaped from the works, ordering that he pursue them with <i>hue and cryto be apprehended and punished accordinge to law</i> ²²⁷ . He also failed to report on their numbers as required by the Council of State, the Company repeatedly asking him for this information. In August 1652 he was reported to have found many <i>deales and plancks that were stolen away .. and ... employed them to his owne use</i> ²²⁸ . The Company met Kelsey during their visit to Cambridge and they questioned him about <i>severall abuses alledged to bee done unto them and defects in the Works which he is redy to make goode</i> . Shortly afterwards the Scots were

Name	Role
	given their freedom to leave, and Kelsey disappears from the roll of Company officers in September 1652 ²²⁹ .
Arthur Tench	Arthur Tench had the position of clerk comptroller of the works with a salary of eighty pounds a year ²³⁰ , having previously worked in a more junior role, keeping records of the contracts and payments in the level. He played an important role in William Jessop's audits of the Company business and was required to send up information regularly to London in response to the Company's attempts to keep control of expenditure ²⁵⁸ . This was not always <i>received with the required promptness</i> ²³¹ . In January 1653 he was also given the role of clerk of contracts when the existing holder of the post failed in his duties for which he was given an additional allowance.
John Fountayne	The Adventurer, John Fountayne, was a lawyer and provided legal advice to the Company as well as contributing to the work of many of the Company committees. Fountayne was also involved in several land transactions, including the purchase of 4000 acres of land in January 1651 for £1850 ²³³ . In July 1651 he was ordered to be retired out of the north to be resident on the works. He was actively involved in the transfer of Scottish prisoners of war to the Fens ²³⁴ and acted as arbitrator between the Company, Robert Henley and Sir Cornelius Vermuyden in January 1654. He offered his house at Boswell Court for several Company meetings in 1654 ²³⁶ .
Edmund Welsh	Edmund Welch was principal overseer Robert Burton's deputy ²³⁷ and took over this role when Burton fell out of favour with the Company ²³⁸ . In a review of Company employees in January 1653 ²³⁹ he was described as <i>slow and not dilligently attendent upon the workes, being also much diverted from the Companies service by his own occasions</i> . Welsh was employed in the 1 st undertaking and on several occasions was asked to provide information on the value of land ²⁴⁰ .
Edward Whalley	Edward Whalley was a military leader in the civil war and a close associate of Oliver Cromwell, appearing first in the minute books at a Company meeting in October 1653 ²⁴¹ , after which he attended many meetings, perhaps prompted by the civil resistance to the drainage works at this time. Whalley was consulted about disturbances in Willingham ²⁴² in May and Brandon, Hockwold and Wilton in June 1654 ²⁴³ . After Sir Oliver St John's intervention in the management of the Company in August 1654, he was appointed to a committee to review the drainage works ²⁴⁴ then appointed a conservator of the South Level ²⁴⁵ , a position that he held until December 1655 ²⁴⁶ , giving up the role because of his other commitments.
Alexander Blake	Alexander Blake took over oversight of the drainage works in January 1653 in a period when Walter St John was away from the works ²⁴⁷ . Blake was mainly responsible for works in the North Level and undertook a survey of these works alongside Richard Gorges in April 1653 ²¹⁴ . Alongside others, he continued to manage works in the North Level for the remaining period of the minute books.
Colonel Dodson	Colonel Dodson was appointed to manage the drainage works in 1649 during the period when the negotiations between Sir Cornelius Vermuyden and the Company about the role of Director of Works ²⁴⁸ remained unresolved. Prior to this, he received support from the Fens for his own designs ²⁴⁹ . Before Vermuyden became director, Dodson was promised to be employed under him if this occurred but this did not happen but after Vermuyden was appointed in the role, Dodson is no longer mentioned as contributing to the works, although he continued to attend Company meetings and made several claims for money ²⁵⁰ owed to him, even as late as 1655 which were eventually paid.
George Smith and John Hopkinson	George Smith and John Hopkinson were the Company's clerks in London and managed all correspondence and Company record keeping. George Smith died while serving the Company in November 1651 ²⁵¹ .
Valentine Walton	Colonel Walton was a soldier in the civil war and a regicide, signing the execution order

Name	Role
	of Charles I. Walton was also married to Oliver Cromwell's sister and was a member of the Council of State from 1650 to 1652 after which he was made the Governor of Kings Lynn and Crowland. Walton had significant authority in the northern part of the Great Level and this resulted in several disagreements with the Company, notably his authorisation of the cutting of the Adventurers banks at Porland, <i>whereupon hee said hee had noe intention to dreyne Porland but reserves it for accomodation of fish and fowle and no way to prejudice the levell by letting in any water</i> ²⁵² (see Crowland).
Edward Partherich	Sir Edward Patherich attended the Company meetings throughout the period of the minute books. Unlike many of the Adventurers, he had local knowledge of the Fens from his estate near Littleport and he brought this into the meetings. In 1649 he submitted his plans for the initial drainage work that summer ²⁵³ , then later in December his own design for the whole draining of the Fens ²⁵⁴ . Initially this was accepted by the Company ²⁵⁵ but the decision was soon overturned in favour of Sir Cornelius Vermuyden's proposals. Edward Partherich remained an active member of the Company, on committees and general business.

A full list of Adventurers who attended the Company meetings is provided in Appendix 3.

Oliver Cromwell

Oliver Cromwell's name appears on the first page of the minute books - *it was desired by the Adventurers and Participants that the Earles of Arundell and Bedford bee desired to attend Lieutenantt General Cromwell and Comissary Ireton ... to returne a thankefull acknowledgement*¹, alluding no doubt to the assistance given by him in steering the Act of Drainage through Parliament by his advocacy and 'behind the scenes' influence. As someone who grew up on the edge of the Fens and had lived in Ely, Cromwell had been engaged in debates about drainage for many years (e.g., supporting the commoners case in the meetings at Huntingdon that overturned the adjudication of the 1st Undertaking). His influence, both indirectly and directly, would continue to be important throughout the period of the 2nd Undertaking. The Adventurers, especially those based in the Fens, were connected to his circle of power and, if needed, they could call on his help, for example through direct access to soldiers to defend the works. If the drainage had occurred in another party of the country, this may have been far less the case.

A transfer of Scottish prisoners of war to the Fens was suggested first by Cromwell after the battle of Dunbar in 1650² and in October 1651 a month after the Battle of Worcester, *Mr Say, Mr Trenchard, Mr Fountayne and Mr Latch, were desired to wayte on his Excellency the Lord Generall to obteyne a warrant for the delivery of the Scotch prisoners*³.

In March 1652, members of the Company were summoned by Cromwell to meet him to discuss a petition from Over, close to St Ives where Cromwell owned land. The petition was supported by Major General Disbrow (Fleetwood), a close associate of Cromwell's from the civil war. The party who attended Oliver Cromwell included the Earl of Bedford and Sir Cornelius Vermuyden.

Cromwell next helped the Adventurers by sending his owne troops to be used in the final adjudication in Ely in March 1653 to meet and accompany the Lord Commissioners, the soldiers meeting them at Earith bridge⁵. In April, Cromwell's troops were sent to quell resistance to the drainage works near Swaffham (see **Resistance**), the Company making a direct petition to Cromwell to help with the disturbances⁶. Cromwell responded by issuing a warrant to Major Parker who led his troop;

I heare some unruly persons have lately comitted great outrages in Cambridgesheyre about Swaffham and Botisham in throwing downe the workes makinge by the Adventurers and menacinge those they employ

thereabout, wherefore I desire you to send one of my troops with a captain who may by all meanes perswade the people to quietnes by lettinge them know they must not riotously doe any thinges, for that must not be suffered, but if there bee any wrongly done by the Adventurers upon complaint such course will bee taken as apperteynes to justice and right will be done.

Cromwell chose not to simply condemn the rioters as *evill disposed persons* as the Adventurers did but recognised that there might be two sides of the argument. Later in 1653, a letter from Jonas Moore referred to *evill disposed persons who threatened to cut downe and destroy the double sasse and dam at Salters Lode to the prejudice of the whole levell*⁷. Cromwell was again petitioned and sent a company of soldiers to protect the works.

In May 1654, Cromwell issued an *Ordinance for the Preservation of the Works of the Great Level of the Fens* that provided the Adventurers with increased power to penalise landowners who failed to pay their taxes and, if required, to sequester to their land. It also enabled damages to be recovered from anyone who harmed the drainage works by sale of their goods, forcing them to work for the Company, or if this failed, to send them to a house of correction. Anyone maliciously damaging any banks or drains would be prosecuted as a felon. The sheriffs and officers of justice were ordered to support the ordinance. It is highly likely that the members of the Company of Adventurers close to Cromwell, such as Oliver St John or John Thurloe helped frame this ordinance. The ordinance is referred to in the minute book in relation to the breaking up of a bridge over Bevills Leam between Whittlesey and Ramsey; a dozen copies of the ordinance were to be printed and distributed in the area⁸.

The final episode in the minute books related to the Lord Protector is his pursuit of 200 acres of land in Londoners Fen near Ramsey, a claim first raised in March 1653⁹ and pursued on his behalf by John Thurloe. Jonas Moore was ordered to survey the land, followed by another letter to him in May to report progress, followed by a reminder sent in December 1653¹⁰. A letter on the 15th December refers to Cromwell's complaint of *hard usage hee received in the not setting out the land* and he threatened to raise a petition against the Company to gain redress. Moore appears to have considered the issue closed, having previously *mentioned satisfaction in the thing*. Sir Cornelius Vermuyden and Andrew Henley were requested to meet Cromwell and in February it turned out that the Company had lost Jonas Moore's map of the land which had been issued to John Thurloe, and he was asked to make another at *all the speede you can*, along with information in which lots the land resided. The outcome was that the land claimed was held by Edmund Bell and others¹² and Anthony Hamond and Robert Castell, were ordered to negotiate with them to free the land. Eventually, the Company ordered that part of the land be bought from a Captain Breton (60 acres) but they were informed that *Mr Edmund Bell cannot make a tithe to the 140 acres remaining*. They resolved to try the tithe in court, nominating the lawyers for the trial and paying their fees¹³. In the end it was necessary to set out alternative land sold by John Thurloe to Captain Breton who was then paid £3.13.09 an acre for 200 acres of land in the 10th Lot, which was then set out by Jonas Moore¹⁴ and finally transferred to Cromwell in May 1655¹⁵. It is interesting that during a time when so many urgent state matters were pressing, Cromwell pursued his claim for the land on which he seems to have had no clear justification. Not surprisingly the Company 'bent over backwards' to help him. It is also interesting that despite the urgency, it took over two years to resolve the claim.

The Workers

Throughout the period of the minute books, the Company had a difficult relationship with their workforce. In addition to needing huge numbers of labourers in a time following the civil war when traditional relationships with landowners had broken down, they needed skilled officers to manage the works. Bearing in mind the huge scale of the drainage project, far greater than any civil engineering project ever

attempted in England, such experienced workers must have been hard to find. The Company was also concerned that some workers might be hostile to the government and the drainage works and act as saboteurs, and in April 1651 Lieutenant Francis Underwood was asked *to take great care to discover all such persons as are dangerous to the state and disaffected to the present government may be removed from the works*.

The primary cause for problems with the labourers was a failure to pay them on time, partly due to financial problems but also logistical difficulties in moving large sums of cash around such remote parts of the Fens. Early on in the project, Colonel Dodson's failure to pay the workers on time in October 1649 caused the workers to *fall into mutanies and seize upon the officers and threaten to carry them away and cut them in peeces*². The rebelliousness of the workmen is also referred to in relation to the dispute with the takers about the backfloores in November 1651; the Company fearing *clamours and mutiny* if they failed to pay these men and considered bringing in the army to deal with the situation. Failure of the takers to pay the workmen is mentioned again as a cause of mutiny in January 1651³. In April 1652, the minute book mentions that before a recent pay day at Sutton there had not been one *in 14 some say 19 weekes together, in so much as the reason of the ill paie tis enformed the workmen doe disert their worke and will doe more for others for 10d then for the Companie for 16d*⁴. On the 14th June 1652 they make report that *their owne reputation wounded and the life of their agents endangered through the clamour of workmen caused by the pretence that there hath not been sufficient money in the country to answer the emergencies of pay days*⁵. Only £800 was brought for the pay day at Earith rather than the required £1500 and as a result many workers had to be turned away and the Company's agents were therefore *exclaymed upon, curst and threatened and might pished in outrage*. As had occurred previously in King's Lynn, the Company stressed that this had not been the result of a lack of money but rather mismanagement of its deployment. In July, however, similar problems arose from not releasing money for pay as required in Mildenhall, Brandon and Stoake where there was *clamour for not payinge their workemen when they had all waies more and more than enough in the expenditors handes to paie all men*. The failure to pay the men caused *their agents to bee clamoured on and brought into perill of their lives*⁶.

In August 1651 the Company were informed that *a great deale of clipt money was paid to the workmen* which had caused *great complaint* and the Company sent a letter to the workmen to tell them *that is was contrary to their mind for the workmen to receive clipt money*⁷. In November, they refer to the clipt money *causing clamour* in the country⁸.

All these events illustrate the logistical challenges the Company faced in employing huge armies of men managed by a very small workforce of Company officers and agents. They relied on takers who hired the workmen on their behalf and took a large cut of the pay. This increased their costs and also made it harder to control the labourers.

Bearing in mind the huge extent of the drainage works, the Company employed a remarkably small number of officers. In London they employed a treasurer⁹, *expenditor* and *receivor* to manage incoming moneys and payments to be issued, as well as *clarkes*¹⁰ (George Smith and John Hopkinson¹³) to keep records of the Company business and manage correspondence. The salaries of these officers included a provision for deputies to be paid to support each of these roles. In addition, the Company paid the Director of Works¹¹ (Sir Cornelius Vermuyden) who designed and managed the engineering works, as well as comptrollers¹² who directed the works, taking his orders from the Company rather than from the Director of Works. In addition, further officers were required at the works, including a principal overseer¹⁴ (Robert Burton) with a team of overseers beneath him, a principal surveyor with a team of sub-surveyors, plus local clerks to management contracts and payments on site. When Sir Cornelius Vermuyden was awarded the role of Director of Works in January 1650, he said he required one surveyor, three overseers, one *expenditor* and one clerk in the country to support him¹⁵. In January 1651, the only employees in the

Fens were Robert Burton the overseer, Palmer an under-surveyor, Mr Tench the clerk comptroller as well as under-overseers¹⁶. As the drainage works expanded, this number increased and in April 1652 nine employees are mentioned (in addition to the roles of the Adventurers)¹⁷. In August 1652 this had increased to 19 employees¹⁸ and in August 1654 the salaries of 24 employees are listed¹⁹.

The Company were often disappointed by the quality of their employees and sought to reduce their number to lessen their expenditure²⁰. No recognition is given to the extreme workload many of these men must, inevitably, have been subject to at times, bearing in mind the great complexity and extent of the drainage works, managed by so few of them. In January 1653 a review was carried out of the workers to *examyn the miscarriages of their officers as hath byn employed in the workes of dreyning of the Great Levell*, which was scathing²¹; for example John Cooley was described as negligent, George Barnes management of the works was considered dangerous to the *Companies profitt and service* and Edmund Welch was *slow and diverted by his private occasions*. In addition, Jeffrey Hawkins was *not fitt and to be discontinued*, Thomas More is an *officer useles*, William Palmer is *seldome observed to bee on the workes* and Richard Kendall and John Farmer *unfitt to bee employed further*. Even for those who were considered acceptable, the comments were hardly glowing. Anthony Ringwood was under suspension from employment but *since he hath carryed himself well*. Henrie Fynnimore was *a stoute man but in other respectes not well qualified for the Companie service*. Only Arthur Trench received some praise *as honest able and fitt to bee continued*. Despite this damning account, most of these men continued to work for the Company, perhaps because it was hard to find better replacements.

The Company's mistrust of their workforce was further shown in an incident in November 1651 when they ordered the keeper of the sasses at Stanground to be immediately sent up to London at their expense so they could question him directly and give him direct orders rather than going through their officers in the Fens³⁵.

In February 1651, an overseer called Newton was dismissed, accused of being *instrumentall in procuringe the north banke of Moretons Leame to bee cutt and did not make it up in due tyme according to the duty of his place*, Sir Cornelius Vermuyden is desired to send word whether hee gave directions for the cutting of it and upon what reason and how it comes to passe that the snow lying upon the grownd it was not made up before the floode²². The Company sought to remove other poor and negligent officers and Anthony Hamond was asked to reduce the number of oversees April 1651 *upon any misdemeanor or unfaithfullness to remove any of the said bad oversees*²³. In October 1651, the Company ordered a *suspension of the officers sallaryes, doe now upon information given unto them of the neglecte of their overseers in their imployment, thinke fitt to leave it to their discretion to imploy as many as they thinke necessary and to dismissee the rest*²⁴. In April 1652, the Company noted that a *multitude of officers were imployed* that included some that had previously been dismissed, contrary to the Company's orders. An instruction was then issued to reduce their number²⁵. In June 1653 when a decision was made to remove one of the under-surveyors, Wright was first retained because he was employed since the 1st Undertaking but later Pigshill was kept because *Wright is more given to the cupp then the other*²⁶.

In 1654, in an unusual show of generosity, the Company ordered that, *Whereas Tompson, Walker and Nutt amongst other poore men have petitioned the Company for old debts due to them for lockspittinge in former times but in regard it beinge long agoe and they not able to make appeare how the same is instantly due, it is ordered that Tompson, Walker and Nutt bee recommended to Sir Cornelius Vermuyden and Mr Hamond who are desired to employ them in the service of the Companie in lockspittinge or otherwise*²⁷.

Another long standing problem for the Company was corruption amongst their officers and workmen. In October 1651 the Company sent a letter to Anthony Hamond and John Thurloe³⁴ about the *neglecte of*

theire overseers and officers, and that they detained money in theire hands and yet the worke not done to the great prejudice of the Company and have occasioned great clamour in the Country. As mentioned before, Robert Burton was accused of malpractice in letting out contracts at excessive rates (see **Robert Burton**), with the help of Burrowes, Shelton, Palmer and Ringwood (Palmer was accused of *falsely certifying the good carriage of the under overseers to procure theire sallary*)²⁸. William Jessop also refers to poor practice when he audited the management of contracts in the Fens (see **William Jessop**)²⁹. In addition, widespread theft of materials took place, such as planks and wheelbarrows by the workers and others, and enquiries were ordered into this in November 1650, August 1652³⁰. In May 1651, a watch be set up at night and sabbath day to prevent theft of materials left at the works³¹ and in January 1652, *severall writs* were issued for arresting the *stealers of planks*³².

Corruption and theft of materials and tools by poor men was inevitable on works in such remote places, managed by so few overseers, but this did not make it any less frustrating for the Company with their expenditure far exceeding their budgets.

The Prisoners of War

The Scottish prisoners

In the autumn of 1651, large numbers of Scottish prisoners of war from Cromwell's battles with the Scottish army, led by Charles II, were transferred to the Fens to provide labour on the drainage works. The primary reason for this transfer is likely to have been the Council of State's need to dispose of the large number of prisoners in a way that had low risk of them regrouping to renew their fight against the Commonwealth. Wherever they were placed, looking after a large numbers of prisoners of war would be an expensive and disruptive exercise. Cromwell was aware of these potential problems from an early stage; shortly after the battle of Dunbar he wrote that *We can find no way how to dispose of these prisoners that will be consisting with these two ends to wit, the not losing them and not the starving of them, neither of which we will willingly incur*²². The Scottish prisoners of war offered the Company of Adventurers cheap labour at a time when they were having problems with funding the work so they were receptive but nervous about the proposal.

The first mention of the Scottish prisoners of war in the minute book was on the 1st October 1651¹ about a month after the battle of Worcester where the Scots lost to the Commonwealth's larger army, and many thousands of soldiers were taken prisoner. An order was made by the Council of State for the transfer of the Scottish prisoners from Tothill Fields and York on the 11th October 1651². The Company and Council of State recognised that employing large numbers of potentially hostile prisoners of war was not without risk and discussions took place about *preventinge theire runninge away, or actinge any thinge prejudiciall to the present Government, and keeping them at worke*. A provost marshal and guards, provided by the state, were to be appointed to control the prisoners and they were to be dressed in white kersey cloth to set them apart from the other workers⁸. The prisoners were to be paid a small sum to reduce resentment against their forced labour whilst the Company agreed to be fined if they failed to control the prisoners (*if greater than ten percent escaped north of the River Trent or if they acted in any way prejudicial to the state*). The Company made clear that they were *fearful to enter into* these arrangements and required the state to provide the necessary security to control the prisoners. The order to select and transfer the prisoners followed shortly afterwards on the 14th October³.

The Council of State also required the Company to keep a record of any escapes and deaths amongst the prisoners and report this to them on a monthly basis⁷. An overseer called John Kelsey⁴ was appointed to keep control of the prisoners with a weekly salary of ten shillings and sixpence to work alongside a

provost marshal called John Johnston⁵ from Major Colonel Baxter's regiment, also to be paid a salary by the Company, who supervised the guards.

The first 165⁶ prisoners to arrive in the Fens were transferred in October 1651 from Tothill Fields, a prisoner of war camp in Westminster in London. During the previous two months they had been marched from Scotland to fight in the battle of Worcester, again been marched to London as prisoners, then were detained in overcrowded insanitary conditions in the camp. Many of them must have been in a very poor state of health and, consequently, before their transfer, the prisoners were inspected and a list made of those fit for work¹¹. Selecting the prisoners in the best state of health must have been of great importance to the Company to avoid ill health and disease amongst their own workforce and to ensure they would receive effective workers.

A further order was issued on the 16th of October to receive a further group of prisoners from York⁹ and a further motion was made on the 22nd October to receive prisoners from Nottingham¹⁰ (this transfer does not appear to have occurred as it is not mentioned again). The first group of prisoners were transferred from London, escorted by the army and Company officers, Thomas Bunbury and Hugh Farnham, and Corporal Foster was paid a gratuity of 40 shillings for this service. They arrived at Earith in late October 1651; a desperate half starved men, the like of which the people of the Fens had never seen before.

Further, arrangements for the transfer of prisoners from York were made in mid-October 1651, also likely to have been captured during the Worcester campaign, perhaps at the battles that occurred during their journey from Scotland before the battle, or later when they fled back toward Scotland (Council of State papers²¹ of the 13th September mention that York had received prisoners who had escaped from Worcester).

Thomas Bunbury, the officer involved in the transfers of prisoners from Tothill Fields was ordered to *repayre to Yorke*, and apply himself to the commander of the guard of Scottish prisoners there, and to desire to see them *drawne forth, and, thereby to informe himself how many able persons there are of them hayle and sound, without wives, and willing and accustomed to labour*¹¹. The importance of ensuring the prisoners were healthy was made clear once more, but, in this case, also that they should not have wives, perhaps to avoid the complications of the prisoners being followed by the families. A further order was made that a letter be written to the Commissioner at York, to send the selected prisoners to Peterborough to be received by Thomas Bunbury. Mr Walker, one of the Adventurers, was told to exercise governance over Thomas Bunbury in the selection of the Scottish prisoners¹².

Mr Walker arrived in York in late October 1651 and on the 14th November; the minute book refers to a letter from him to the Company related to the transfer of the prisoners and the purchase of shoes and stockings before commencing their march south, Mr Walker being asked to make the required payments to be reimbursed later by the Company¹³. On the 21st November the Company was informed that 210 prisoners were marching from York to Peterborough and were expected to arrive by the 30th November¹⁴. A letter was then sent by Mr Walker on the 28th November from Grantham that the prisoners were shortly to arrive at Peterborough¹⁵ then, after their arrival at Peterborough they were to be transferred by Thomas Bunbury to the drainage works.

On the 5th November, after the arrival of soldiers from London but before the arrival of prisoners from York, the following entries to the minute book were made, although it is unclear how many further transfers took place¹⁶:

A question beinge putt whether or not, the Companie will have any more Scotch workemen employed on the workes, it was resolved in the affirmative

Another question being also put, how many more shall be employed, it was resolved there should bee as many more employed as will make up those now employed a thousand Scotch workemen.

Events related to the possible transfer of Scottish soldiers who were captured by Cromwell at the battle of Dunbar a year earlier in 1650, and then detained in Durham Cathedral²², are less clear. After the battle, Cromwell wrote that *some of the prisoners might be sent to Lynn, some to Chester*, so the possibility of deploying the prisoners in the Fens was considered long before 1651. On the 13th of October 1651 an order was made by the Council of State²¹: *The Scottish prisoners at Newcastle or Durham to be sent to Lynn, and delivered to the Adventurers for draining the fens, upon the same terms as those at London and York, and they to give their answer within three or four days whether they will accept them*. No specific mention is, however, made in the minute books about the prisoners in Durham until the 31st December 1651¹⁷, *to get 500 Scotch prisoners from Durham to bee send to Lynne according to the order lately made at the Councell of State*. On the 9th January 1652, Mr Say, one of the Adventurers, was ordered to speak to Sir Arthur Hasselrig (Governor of Newcastle) to request a warrant for the transfer of the prisoners¹⁸. This warrant was to be issued to Mr Walker, who would then select prisoners and make arrangements for their transfer to the Fens as he had done at York. A further order was made by the Company on the 21st March to Mr Walker to go to Durham and make choice of all such Scotch prisoners *as are hayle and sound and fitt for labour to bee employed in the service of the Companie as soon as the Companie have obteyned a warrant for the purpose under the hand of Sir Arthur Hasilrigge*¹⁹. Subsequently, on the 3rd of May 1652, a further order from the Company stated that *as soone as Mr Say have procured a warrant under the hand and seale of Sir Arthur Hasselrigge that Mr Walker is hereby desired to repaire to Durham and there make choice of such Scotch prisoners as he shall finde hayle and sounde to bee drawne out for the use and service of the Companie*²⁰. Several possibilities arise from this information; the requests for a warrant in March and May may have been related to more transfers of prisoners or the Company may have delayed the transfer because it had other priorities or because conditions to progress the work were poor at this time of year. Alternatively, Arthur Haselrig may have delayed issuing the warrant, perhaps because of the atrocious condition of the prisoners in Durham²². Finding 500 healthy prisoners to send to the Fens, a project highly regarded and scrutinised by the Council of State, may have been difficult bearing in mind the conditions of their internment at Durham, which would have highlighted Haselrig's failings in the management of the prisoners. Council of State papers on the 1st March²¹ indicate that Sir Arthur Haselrig ordered that *all the Scotch prisoners under the degree of captain, who were not highlanders, should be discharged from at Durham and given passes to return to Scotland*. This order was, however, rescinded on the 17th March²¹ so that the detainment of prisoners should be continued (perhaps because this order contradicted the earlier order for the transfer of the prisoners to the Fens). On the 1st of July 1652²¹, however, a further order was made that: *The private Scotch soldiers, prisoners at Durham and Gloucester, to be released, and permitted to return to their own country*. In contrast to Worcester, it is therefore uncertain that any prisoners from Durham arrived in the Fens.

Before their arrival in the Fens, arrangements were made to clothe the Scots prisoners, with boots, stockings, caps, shirts and an over-garment made of kersey cloth²³. In making these provisions the Company was conscious to reduce costs; for example, *buying shoes in Wisbech which was known to be a cheap place*²⁴. On the 10th November 1651 some of the Scots prisoners complained about the discomfort of wearing these clothes and their dislike of the white colour despite the Company stating that they had been pleased when consulted at Tothill Fields in London before they were transferred to the Fens²⁵. The Company asked for names of the prisoners who had complained with a view to sending them away beyond sea for not being fit servants on the works. This is likely to have been a reference to the Caribbean where some of the prisoners were sent²². On the 7th January 1652, there is mention that the prisoners were unfurnished and destitute of clothes and a further 256 shirts and 128 suits and stockings were ordered two days later²⁶.

The only reference to the arrangements for accommodation for the prisoners was on the 6th May 1652 when it was noted that money was due for payment of the soldiers' lodgings²⁷. Another insight into the domestic arrangements for the Scots prisoners is provided by an entry in the minute book on the 29th May 1652 that several of the Scots women were *bigge with child, amongst the workmen*²⁸. Mr Drewry *on behalfe of the Country therefore desire[d] the Companie order on some course taken to free the Country from charge* which refers to help for the poor required from local parishes. This suggests that some of the wives of the Scots prisoners followed their husbands to the Fens (alternatively local women may have been described as Scots once married to Scotsmen). Later, in September 1652 a Scots wife called Bridget Chiney is recorded to have written to the Company to ask if her husband, James Chiney, one of the Scots prisoners, could be transferred to less arduous work²⁹.

The Council of State papers state that *an allowance of 2d a day was to be provided to prisoners at Yorke or any other place, provided they be not made over to merchants*²¹. There are also several references in the minute book to allowances made to the prisoners. When the initial arrangements for the transfer of prisoners were being made, the minute book notes *that receiving reward from us for their labour they might have just cause to blesse God for the parliamentary mercy to them by order from the Counsell of State*². In May 1652, the Company ordered that a warrant be made by the Companie expeditor for money for the soldier's lodgings like the usual one made for their pay²⁷ and on the 21st January 1652 it was decided by the Company to increase the wages of the prisoners to encourage them to go on with their work rather than attempt to escape - *they thinke it not fitt to remove them from the hard worke but to encrease their wages the more to encourage them to goe on*³⁰.

After they first arrived in the Fens, it was intended that the Scots prisoners would first be deployed on the north side of the Bedford River³¹, following the long standing desire by the Company that the drainage work should be directed to this area. On the 19th November 1651, however, the Scots prisoners were set upon *bottoming the new Ouze*³², work that took much longer than planned with several delays noted in the minute book before the river was ready to run in July 1652. The prisoners were also employed on work at Mepal³³, presumably on the adjacent 100 Foot River and later, in August 1652, the Scots prisoners were set to repairing the north bank of the Bedford River between Earith and Mepal³⁴. In addition to working on the drainage works, the Scots prisoners were hired out to landowners to hassock their land³⁵ (at a rate of 6 shillings per acre). This included the lands taken by Adventurers, including Robert Henley and Cornelius Vermuyden who were required to pay the Company at the same rate³⁶. Hassocking involved cutting away the existing Fen vegetation, for example, sedges, reeds and hassocks of grass to expose the peat soil to then grow crops. Several prisoners were also transferred to work for private individuals; the Adventurers, Mr Trenchard and Mr Trafford, took two Scots prisoners, William Cristen and William Worley, respectively³⁷ in October 1651, and James Cuthbert was transferred to Thomas Challoner and Colonel Marten, although this was delayed by illness³⁸. On the 9th January 1652, it was ordered that Lord Oliver St John could choose twenty Scots prisoners to be employed in his service³⁹.

On the 23rd February 1652 it was ordered by the Company *that all such Scottish prisoners as are now employed in the workes of the Great Levell of the Fennes shall bee divided amongst the Companie of Adventurers according to the twenty Lotts or Shares and Lotts are to bee drawne for them and it is further ordered that Mr Hamond bee desired to take care to see there bee an iquall and indifferent division made according to the aforesaid twenty lotts or shares*⁴⁰. Other prisoners were allocated to particular roles, including 4 prisoners who were transferred to assist Jonas Moore, the surveyor, *to help in rowing and carrying chayne and other employment*⁴¹ whilst two Scots prisoners were selected to act as messengers for the Company, carrying messages across the level and between the Adventurers⁴². One of these messengers, Alexander MackDell is mentioned in the minutes on several occasions and was trusted to such a degree that he travelled between the Fens and the Company meeting place in London. He was paid

an allowance for clothes and shoes and was provided with a bed and bedding and he continued to work for the Company after the other prisoners had long gone.

Despite their dreadful experiences before their arrival in the Fens and their arduous work in the cold, damp and wet of the drainage works, there is little record in the minute book of loss of prisoners due the poor health and none through death. One record of illness is related to the Scots prisoner, Ben Cuthbert, who was due to be transferred to a landowner in the Fens but this was postponed because of illness⁴⁴. Later there is reference to a Scots prisoner *whose feete begin to rott*⁴⁵, presumably due to constant exposure to waterlogged ground much like trench foot in the First World War. The Company considered transferring him to Cambridge or London for treatment.

The Council and State and the Company of Adventurers recognised there were risks associated with transferring a large number of potentially hostile Scottish soldiers into a wild area where it might be difficult to maintain order and prevent escapes and, following the first transfer of prisoners from London, a Parliamentary order was made on the 18th November, *That such [Scots Prisoners] who have been placed or disposed of by the Parliament or Council of State, or by their Authority, or by any of the Officers of the Army, as have, or shall run away from the Places where they are so disposed, or go into Scotland without Leave or Licence had from the Parliament, or Authority under the Parliament, shall suffer Death, and shall be proceeded against by Martial Law, and punished with Death; And that Mr. Solicitor-General do prepare and bring in an Act to that Purpose*. This order was noted in the minute book on the following day. *There is an order of Parliament made this daie, that it is death without mercy for any of the Scotts which run awaie, and it is now printing, and it shall be sent to you by next; and the Company expect that Kelsey and the provost marshall, Johnston, take care of retaking such as are or shall run away, that justice may be done*. This order is likely to have been promoted by members of the Company⁴⁸ through their connections in the Council of State. It may have been a response to a report to the Company on the 3rd November of the departure of some of the prisoners⁴⁶ then on 14th November that seven prisoners had run away⁴⁷ in only two weeks following their arrival on the works. On the 19th January 1652 the Company agreed to seek to obtain further orders from the Council of State and Parliament for measures to prevent escapes⁵⁰. The Company ordered that 500 copies of the order of Parliament to be printed and be distributed around the Great Level and put up at convenient places in every town⁴⁹, which was paid for by the Company with a further order planned to punish all *who receive, retayne or entertayne them* [the Scottish prisoners].

Despite these efforts, keeping the prisoners under control and preventing their escape was a problem throughout their stay. The overseer John Kelsey and the provost marshal John Johnston were responsible for preventing escapes and tracking down and punishing prisoners who ran away⁵¹. Kelsey was also required so send a list each month of the losses of prisoners by escape or death but he repeatedly failed to complete this list, much to the annoyance of the Company⁵². The Company intended to ensure escapees would be pursued and even before the order of Parliament was issued, *lett the rest know that there is a stricte law persuinge their fellows, even death without mercy for those that absent themselves without leave*⁵³. On the 14th November the Company ordered that Kelsey and Johnston *send hue and cry after escaped prisoners that they may bee apprehended and punished according to law*⁵⁴. On the 14th January 1652 the Company were *glad to heare the justice upon the Scotch prisoner*⁵⁵.

The Company ordered an investigation into the actions of the provost marshal, John Johnston, to determine if he had been negligent in allowing the escape of the prisoners and in failing to pursue them, and intended to send him for court martial if he had been found to have failed in his duties. On the 14th January 1652⁵⁵, the Company confined Johnston to be tried. On the 19th January the Company considered moving Johnston to be tried for his life at a Court of War but postponed the decision on how to proceed against him⁵⁶.

A further reference is made to the escape of prisoners on the 19th January⁵⁶ that *the Company feare there hath not byn that care used in keeping of them nor in pursuing after them when they are run away as should have byn*. Another is made on the 4th February about someone called Billingham⁵⁷, presumably a local man, who had enticed prisoners to escape.

The circumstances of the departure of the Scottish prisoners are unclear but it is likely to have been a belated response of the changing political situation between England and Scotland. On the 18th March 1652, an Act of Parliament incorporated Scotland into one Commonwealth with England and abolished the King's power in Scotland²¹. Following this, Arthur Haselrig moved to release prisoners from Durham on the 1st March 1652 which was delayed then put into effect in July 1652. Prisoners in other camps such as at Gloucester were released. The Company of Adventurers with their connections in Parliament must have been aware of these developments, and in June 1652, two Scottish prisoners, George Hume and James Hewston were allowed to return to Scotland by the Company's officers, Mr Latch and Mr Drewry⁵⁸ and in August the payments to the Scots were stopped and many ran away⁵⁹. John Kelsey was interviewed at Cambridge by the Company at this time about how the Scots prisoners had been deployed and to resolve outstanding issues on the works and shortly afterwards was no longer listed as an officer of the Company⁶⁰. An overseer of the prisoners no longer required.

After this, there are no further mentions of the Scots prisoners in the minute books.

Dutch prisoners of war

Dutch prisoners of war, captured at the navy battle of Goodwin Sands in May 1652 are first mentioned in the minute books on the 7th March 1653 in a letter from the Council of State expressing their willingness to *dispose of certain Dutch prisoners for the use and service of the Company*⁶¹. After consulting Oliver St John and receiving a further letter from the Council of State (via John Thurloe), the Company agreed to receive them, subject to their being fit for work⁶². Before 500⁶³ prisoners arrived in June 1653, the Company made a provision of *spades and shovels to worke with and hutts for them to lodge in*⁶⁴. Captain Stanley Stevenson was ordered to collect them from Ely and given *five poundes.... to lay out for twenty pairs of shoes*, for their march⁶⁵. The prisoners were chosen by Mr Walker, who had selected the Scots prisoners, before their transfer from Yarmouth⁶⁶. Mr Walker and Mr Mainstone were made responsible for deploying the prisoners and looking after them, housing them at first in *howses, barnes of churches* and attending to their *dyett*⁶⁷.

On the 18th July the Company received information that the Dutch prisoners were to be kept in the Isle and Ely and *not to be quartered any place out of the Isle nor in any howse there but in Inns and Ale howses*⁶⁸. This limited their value to the Company as most of the works were outside the Isle so they decided to keep them at nearby Swaffham, Cottenham and Waterbeach, where soldiers had already been stationed there to suppress civil disorder against the works. The prisoners, however, *refused not only to worke but are encouraged by the local people of Swaffham, Waterbeach, Cottenham and other places who are opposite to this worke of dreyninge, to run away, endanger them in the corne*. The Company also complained that *the officers who indeed are very careful to ride after them and finde them out and bring them backe ... have no power to punish them*. Although very willinge to receive these Dutch prisoners to *free the state from charge*, the Company complained that they were *a great burden and trouble to them, they being resolved not to worke nor will worke and say they are prisoners of warre and ought not to be enforced to labour* and requested *greater power to be given to the soldiers by the General [Cromwell] or Council of State to punishe them by puttinge them into gaol or otherwise as shall bee thought fitt*.

Later George Dalton, the Company's *expenditor* was ordered *to attend Colonell Humphrey touchinge the Dutch prisoners that are now sicke in towne and acquaint him that ... they are willinge further to extend their benevolence to them and charity towards them to convey them to London*⁶⁹.

No further mention is made of the Dutch prisoners of war in the minute books but presumably they were returned to the Netherlands once hostilities between the countries had ceased. Unlike the Scots, the Dutch prisoners appear to have been of little value to the drainage works; the different relationship with the Netherlands, another sovereign nation, compared to defeated Scotland, giving them less freedom to deploy them as they wished; instead they were more of a burden than a benefit.

Flooding and weather

Little information on the weather conditions on the drainage works is given by the minute books though the autumn of 1651 and early 1652 appears to have been wet because the rivers are described as being *brimmed full*¹. Historical weather records for England as a whole indicate that the period between 1651 and 1654 was warm and dry, with hot dry summers and drought conditions². The Adventurers, therefore, appear to have been fortunate in facing relatively benign weather conditions during the early key part of the drainage works. If conditions had been less favourable, their strained funds would have been further tested, which might even have led to the failure of the project. Shortly before the final adjudication, however, water levels were high⁴ but flooding did not take place.

In November 1651 the bank of the Old Bedford River burst, which released water across the drainage works and delayed the work⁵. The Company investigated the causes of this breach to determine whether it was related to the quality of the construction of the bank, neglect, sabotage or a general failure of the design of the works. Eventually, they determined that the breach was caused by cutting a drain too close to the bank⁶.

Widespread flooding of the southern level occurred in December 1655⁷ - the following letter was received by Anthony Hamond from their officer William Barnes (this event is not mentioned in the minute books)

On Wednesday last on report of all men (at Cambridge, St Ives and all other rivers), came down the greatest waters that ever was heard of or seene in so much that the Grant run over the banke from the brewhowse and garden inne and hath broke downe most part of the banke that goeth from the river to Waterbeach and hath run over in severall places in the banke downe to Dimocks for that most part of the levell is white with water but the water is now fallen above two foote at Upwell but rise a little yesterday at Ely, the water was soe high and violent that came downe the Ouse that it broke from Godmanchester field and came with that force that at St Ives that it forced the barges from the bridge turning some of there keeled upwards and shook the bridge with that violence that the people durst not stay on it, the water run over Over banke in severall places and on Thursday morninge when my cosen Hamond and I went downe to Earith to looke after the banke wee found the water within a foote and halfe a foote of the top of the banke in most places in Over Fen and severall men of Over at worke to save a breach a quarter of a mile above Erith where the water had run over with that violence that the banke for a pole together was three parts guld away and the men in diffence of savinge it beinge fearfull of carring away by the violence of the water but being encouraged by us by promise of good pay (my cosen being one). I stande by them till late at night and with much paines and industry have preserved it and there is a breach in the north banke at Tubs his house in Sutton Fen which is five pole longe and by the violence of the water thirtie foote deepe as I am informed which hath drowned a great parte of that levell and the Sutton men hath lost 200 sheepe and 4 or 5 beafe what other losse I cannot certainly tell but I feare the breach will not be

suddenly taken. There is also a breach at in Redmore on the south side of Brandon River neare Traces howse which Mr Moore is taking. Sir I shall give you a more particular accoumpt by my next letter.

I would intreat you to speake to your honorable Company that I might have my bill signed for my sallary for I have not money to beare my ridinge charges which are very great. This with my humble service presented to my honorable masters with my kind love and respecte to yourself I rest - George Barnes

Wilburton 24th December 1655.

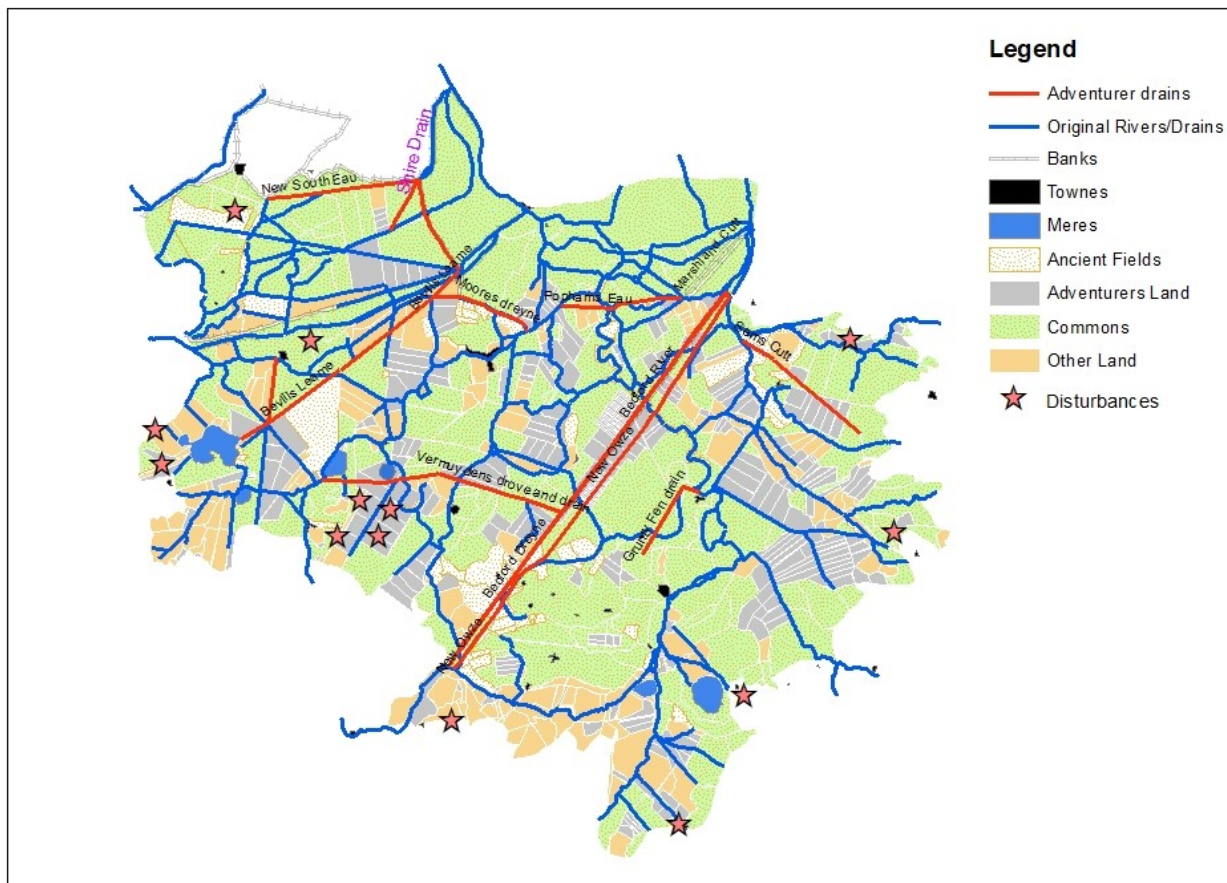
Footnote: Sir - If there be not an order taken for money to pay workemen uppon these sudden and great occasions wee shal be put to great straits and the worke retarded for we cannot gett men to worke without our particular moneys for them from us by reason severall workemen stay for longe for there money which we have made agreement.

Resistance

The drainage works in the Fens caused a great change in the social fabric of a large part of England, ending a way of life that had been essentially unchanged for hundreds of years, a place of wetness and common lands to be replaced by ownership, exclusion and engineering. Resistance was inevitable, foreshadowed by the opposition to the drainage act and uprisings against similar drainage works in Yorkshire in Hatfield Chase, also led by Sir Cornelius Vermuyden. Many local people were naturally resentful that change was being imposed on them and were scared about the outcomes. At the same time, the population was too thinly spread in the Fens to offer meaningful resistance at a time when the infrastructure of state control was strong after the civil war; Cromwell's Commonwealth was defended by military power and soldiers were at hand to confront any resistance to the works. It is difficult to find a similar story in modern Britain but perhaps the closest is the ending of the way of life in mining communities in the 1980's; likewise resistance was inevitable as well as the outcome. Even now the opposition to the drainage forms part of the mythology of the Fens (of the Fen Tigers) and resentment continues about the impositions made by outsiders on this part of the world.

Resistance was slow to grow after the works started in 1649. In April 1650 there were disturbances on the Earl of Exeter's lands and in April 1651 Jonas Moore met opposition when undertaking his surveys of the common lands², the Company asking him to report any tumult or insurrection, along with names and places of abode of those who were responsible. In addition to his obvious technical skills, Jonas Moore must have been a brave man to venture into the wild country with only a handful of helpers to survey the common lands in these circumstances. In the same month, a letter was sent to Lieutenant Colonel Underwood to *discover all such persons as are dangerous to the peace of the state and disaffected to the present government may be removed from the works*³ and a letter received from Anthony Hamond that *touched on a riot by certain women*, and he was again desired to send up a messenger with details of names and abodes of the rioters⁴; a request made many times in the years to come which rarely had success. Within close knit communities such details were unlikely to be easily obtained. Again in April 1651, several further disturbances are mentioned by riotous and tumultuous persons and the Company sought to gain legal advice for the prosecution of the offenders, particularly in relation to disturbances at Crowland⁵, Yaxley, Hassett, Stilton, Holme and the rest of the towns in Huntingdon⁶ but again this was dependent on finding names and places of abode which proved to be difficult to achieve. In May, a warrant was raised in relation to the raising of money in Peterborough to oppose the works⁷.

In May 1651, the Company were informed that *persons disaffected against the drainage works give forth when the presse for soldiers comes unto those parts to take workmen* (instead of the locals), and the Company then contacted the Council of State for the press to exempt their workers⁸.



Map 9 Locations of riots and other resistance to the drainage works as detailed in the text

In August 1651, Mr Adams and Mr Henley were *desired to draw up an Acte of Parliament for making it a felony to cut the bankes of the Great Levell of the Fenns*⁹ and in September the Company received a letter *touching the carrying away of the new bankes in carts*¹⁰.

In November 1651 the Company received a report¹¹ that turf had been cut across a large area of Adventurers land near Upwood, Ramsey and Woodwalton; a criminal act and one of defiance against the drainage works. Clearly the local people decided that if their land to be taken away from them, they would take what they could from the land first. The Company ordered that all of the turf that not yet been taken away be seized and sold, also arranging a guard of soldiers to prevent more being removed¹². The Company also sought not only those who had cut the turf but also those that had refused to move it. They seized 30000 pieces of turf in Cambridge¹³ and sought to find the names of those responsible and to take them to a Justice of the Peace, and issued a writ to have a man called Stephens who had been arrested in Cambridge¹⁴. The Company sought to have a *speedy triall at Westminster* as well as compensation¹⁵. They also issued a petition to the Commissioners to assign other land to replace the lands damaged by the turf cutting¹⁶ and told the local people of Ramsey that *if the inhabitants would eyther present the Lords of the Mannor or their neighbours to send the Commission to assign other land in quantity and quallity in lieu of that cutt into turffe pits, the Companie will release their action against them*¹⁷. The Company also obtained an order under Lieutenant General Fleetwood to move a company of soldiers under Captain Foogall to be quartered in Ramsey and Woodwalton¹⁸.

In November 1651 the Company requested that a man called Newell *to be made exemplary and for the other mutinous persons the Companie is resolved not be bee forced to any satisfaction whatsoever by tumults and ryotts but instead thereof shall without delay endeavour to bringe the riotous to condign punishment wherein the Companie would have taken present course if you had sent up the names of the*

*rioters which they desire you would doe by the next and to send up one or two make oath of the circumstances of the ryott*¹⁹.

In December 1651, reference is made to a cut made to the bank of Carr Dike²⁰.

In May 1652, the Company impounded some cattle for being on Adventurers land, again near Ramsey²¹, and in June they refer to the riot by women²² and sought to take them to the Justice of the Peace and prosecute them to be made an example so that *others shall not dare to attempt the like for the future*. In July, the minute books refer to riot of men in *womens apparell*²³; perhaps the rioters believed they were less likely to be arrested if dressed as women.

In September 1652, there was a report from a Thomas Raintree of *throwinge in off the dike in Swaffham Fenne by commoners* who also threatened Raintree and they sought the names of the culprits so that they could be prosecuted and, in this case, names were found²⁴. The Company, in response to many incidents across the level and to their limited success in forcing prosecutions, sought to develop a more co-ordinated response with applications made to all sheriffs, justices of the peace and ministers to suppress the disturbances and find and prosecute offenders with more force²⁵, and several writs were issued for arrests and indictments in October 1652.

In response to ongoing trouble at Swaffham, arrangements were made in January 1653 to procure a squadron of horse to quarter there, as well as proceeding with the prosecution of rioters from September 1652²⁶. In response to this, 150 men gathered in Swaffham on the 20th April 1653, and expelled the Company's workmen from their labours and menaced and threatened them as well as throwing in the dykes²⁷. The Company responded by issuing a petition to Lord General Cromwell to ask for support and a warrant was given by him to Major Parker to suppress the uprising against the drainage works²⁸. Subsequently, the Company informed their members, and Major Blake in particular in the north level, that such measures could be sought elsewhere if required and suggested that a show of soldiers near Chatteris would be helpful to 'broadcast' this message²⁹. In May and June, however, disturbances continued around Swaffham and Soham and further disturbances occurred in Wereham, Wretton and Stoake, *throwing in the Adventurers works and beateinge the workemen*³⁰. A Captain Babbington's troop in Huntingdon was put on alert to help, and Captain Lifes troop in Cambridge was to be moved to help if required³¹. A further order was issued in June by John Lambert that where *severall unruly people about Swafham, Soham and other parts of the south side of the Great Levell of the Fennes have assembled together in a riotous and tumultuous manner and throwne downe the dikes and sluices belonginge to the Adventurers landes and disturbe them in theire possession, contrary to the law, in that case provided, and to the endangeringe the peace of the Comon Wealth. You are therefore to give order to the Comander in Chiefe of any of the troops of horse in your regiment with quarter most convenient to repaire into the parts aforesaid and to use his endeavor to disperse the above said or other the like or unlawfull assemblies and to aydinge and assistinge to the justices of peace or other civill magistrates in bringing the offenders to punishment and for preventinge the like dissorder for the future*³².

Clearly, the Company were shaken by these events and Mr Vermuyden (Sir Cornelius Vermuyden's son) was asked to identify the towns where opposition was most likely *because of lands taken from them and damages caused to them*. They also named two men, Knight and Manning who were known to have caused *misdemeanor ... about a sluice* and requested to find witness to support their action against them³³. In October the Company became aware that further disorder was planned at Soham and Burway to be initiated by the ringing of a bell and the Justice of the Peace was informed to prevent the insurrection³⁴. In December 1653, Jonas Moore informed the Company that speeches had been made about cutting down and destroying the sluices, sasses and dams at Salters Lode which would threaten the

Petitions of note include ones from Mr Fynnes, Mr Burrell and Mr Morsell in 1650 and 1651 about their land cut in Waldersey; a dispute that took several years to resolve, a further petition delivered from the town of Tyd St Giles about building a bridge near Clowes Crosse in 1651², and another in May 1651 by the people of Glatton and Holme against lands close to their towns taken by the Adventurers³.

In March 1651, the people of Sutton petitioned for the Adventurers lands to be relocated to places less damaging to them, and in July they requested a passage over the new river⁴. A further petition from Sutton was issued to stop the diking out of land in Sutton Meadlands⁵ and in June 1653 they made a further petition about the provision of a bridge over the new Owze⁶.

In February 1652, a petition was issued by the town of Over⁷ that reached the attention of Oliver Cromwell⁸, protesting about harm to their lands from the works. Cromwell ordered Company officers to meet him to discuss the Issue; a dispute that took years to resolve (see **Over**). Lieutenant General Fleetwood was also involved as a local landowner and represented the town in discussions with the Company⁹.

A petition was received from Hockwold in January 1653 in relation to losses of watering places and navigation¹⁰. Other petitions were issued by the inhabitants of Welney regarding the spoiling of 100 acres of land which had been given to them in the name of the chapel and the poor of the town¹¹, and from Littleport, Ely and Downham related to several grounds taken by the Adventurers land¹². The number of petitions reduced after 1653, but included ones from Benwick regarding bridges, highways and passages¹³ and Helgey about provision of a sluice¹⁴.

Many petitions were also received from individuals about lands cut and money owed and letters were sometimes sent directly to the Company and resolved without reference to the Commissioners.

In addition to submissions to the Commissioners, petitions could also be made directly to Parliament to be considered at the Committee of Parliament for Petitions, and in 1653 the Company became aware of a petition led by John Maynard that sought to overturn the Act of Drainage and, therefore, cease their work in the Fens¹⁵. Maynard was a long standing opponent of the drainage works and was active during the debates that preceded the Drainage Act in the 1640s. The Adventurers attended the Committee meeting on the 4th August but the hearing was deferred to the 17th November but when they attended this later meeting the Committee were not *pleased to heare them on it but thought fitt to know the pleasure of the Parliament tending to overthrow an Acte of the late Parliament and spared the time of the members of Parliament and although severall other petitioners were that daie read att the said Committee tendinge to overthrow the said Acte of Parliament, which the petitioners have just cause to suspecte were procured and encouraged by the said Sir John Maynard yet were not the petitioners admitted to heare the resolutions of this honorable Committee touchinge the same*. On the 3rd December Mr Henley became aware of a further debate on this petition, adjourned to that afternoon, and he quickly arranged a meeting to discuss this with the Company¹⁶. They decided to draw up their own petition to the Committee of Parliament for Petitions *to excuse their non attendance yesterdaie upon the committee for want of tymely notice of their summons and to make defence to the petitions of Lynn and Cambridge*. Prior to this, in the expectation that these debates would soon occur, the Company had sought to gather witnesses to support their case and had arranged to bring them to London, only to send them back because of the delays in the process. Suddenly, they had to respond quickly¹⁷. Maynard's case was essentially that the drainage works has been ineffective in improving the condition of the land and, in many cases, had made things worse, which he supported by statements from local people from the Fens. In addition, he asserted that the work had prejudiced navigation in Kings Lynn and Cambridge. The Company's defence was that they were given insufficient notice the defend to case on the 2nd December which should therefore *not*

bee reported as a default. Secondly, they had followed their obligations of the Act of Drainage, discharging £300,000 on the works, risking their estates, and that ten commissioners of great integrity had, after receiving many witnesses at the adjudications, determined that the drainage had been effective. In addition, there was an established process set up by the Act of Drainage to consider any complaints or problems with the works through Commissioners, all living *upon or nere the levell*. They asserted that this process had not been pursued by those with complaints. They also argued that navigation to Cambridge had, in fact, been improved by widening and straightening routes, noting that navigation had survived the recent drought whereas before it had not done so in similar circumstances. Their final point was that if agreed facts determined by the processes of Parliament (i.e. the adjudications) were allowed to be contested and overturned, it would set a precedent, and other cases would ensue that would *bringe a generall unsettlednes to the estates of all people of this Comon Wealth*.

The minute books make no further reference to this petition and it appears to have been lost in the upheavals in Parliament that were soon to follow (on the 12th December, Parliament was dissolved and on the 16th Cromwell was named Lord Protector).

Finances

Raising sufficient money to fund the drainage works was a constant problem for the Adventurers and this issue fills many pages of the minute books. Money was to be raised by taxes issued by the Company to the holders of the lots on 95,000 acres of the Adventurers lands and if the landowners failed to pay their taxes, the Company could force the sale of the defaulter's lands and subtract the taxes owed from the purchase money. The initial budget, set out in Sir Cornelius Vermuyden, was £109,700, although the Company intended aimed to keep this below £90,000 by setting this as a limit above which Vermuyden would be required to pay taxes. Eventually, the Company's expenditure on the works far exceeded this value. The money raised in taxes is shown below. In December 1653, in the response to John Maynard's petition to Parliament, the Company claimed to have spent £300,000¹ (probably, including expenditure in the 1st Undertaking).

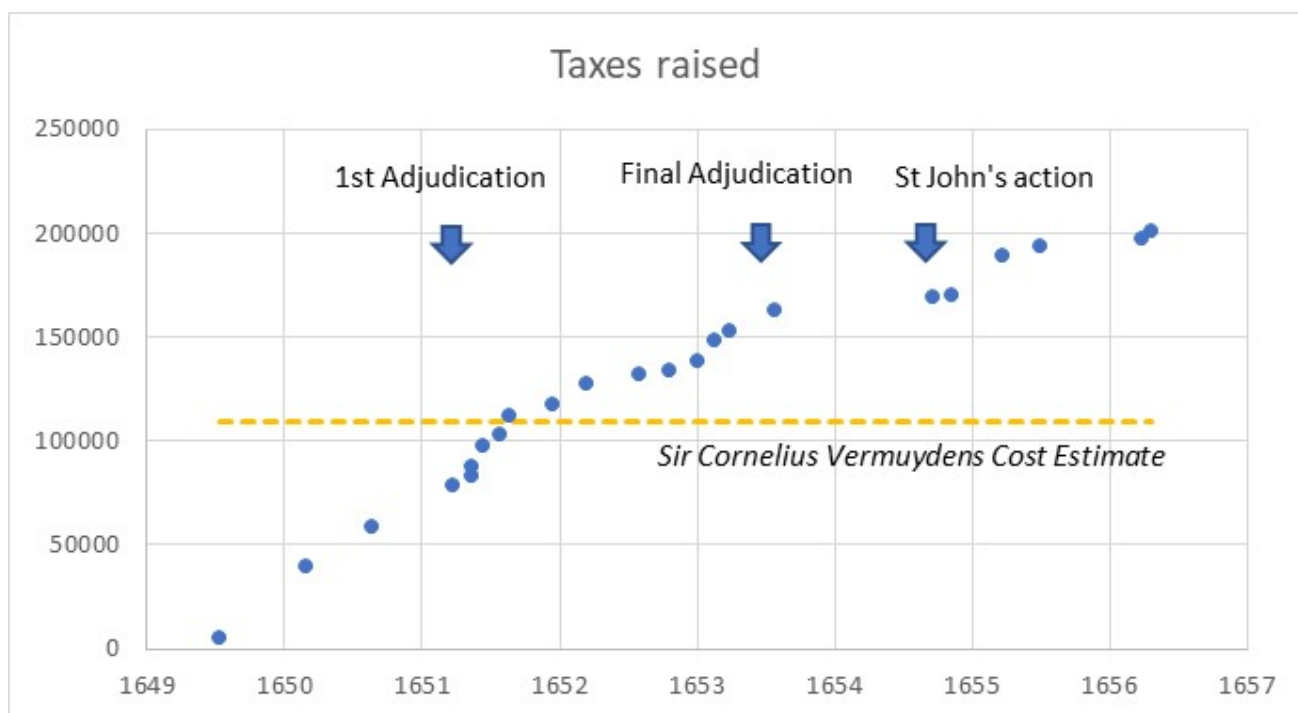


Figure 1 Taxes raised by the Adventurers

The first tax of 2 shillings 6 pence an acre was raised on the 11th June 1649² and it was agreed a week later that the Earl of Bedford, Robert Castell, William Crane and Robert Henley would put forward £25 up front to allow work to start⁴. By the end of the month, however, very few Adventurers had paid their tax and little had been raised. To allow the summer work to start, the Company decided to raise £10000 by selling 4000 of the 13000 acres of land owned by them that had not been allotted to particular Adventurers⁴. This land would be free of tax until the adjudication. In August they also ordered that the rest of land for which taxes had not been paid should be sold. This included some very large land holdings including 5700 acres owned by the Earl of Arundel, 9230 acres owned by Richard Gorges and 5000 acres owned by William Tyringham⁵. In total, taxes had not been received on over 30,000 acres of land, almost a third of the 95000 acres. However, because the default included important landowners, the sale was delayed⁶ until September when further requests were made to pay the taxes. The situation was made even worse because of a dispute raised in Parliament by Benjamin Weston about ownership of 2000 acres of the 13,000 acres of unallotted Adventurers' land⁷. The Company refused to progress the works until the issue was resolved to put pressure on Parliament but this created an impasse that put the entire project at risk. The Adventurers were reticent about sending in their taxes and investors were nervous about buying land. As a result, they were unable to pay their workers and in September 1649 they had to cease progress with the works. Financing of the project had therefore made a very poor start.

Finding purchasers of defaulters land proved difficult and printed bills were put up on walls in Westminster and London to publicise the sales but still very few offers came through⁹. Even when purchasers were found¹⁰, receipt of their payments was slow¹¹. The arrears on the taxes grew larger and larger and the viability of the whole project must have become ever more uncertain, putting off investors further. To avoid the collapse of the project, every Adventurer was asked to find a purchaser of the defaulters land and if they did they would not be asked for any more payments until Michaelmas (29th September). Alternatively, they could make 3 payments of 15 pence an acres tax in which case further payments would be put off until August. The final option presented was to punctually pay all taxes and, if not, their land would be sold¹². This resulted in many new purchasers of defaulters lands and many others agreed to make the 3 payments which began to restore the financial viability of the project.

A decision was made in January 1650 to sell the 10000 acres of land that had been set out for the late King Charles 1 (again free of tax until the adjudication)⁸. Although purchasers were found, receipt of their payments was slow¹³.

Taxes continued to be raised and land sold to fund the works. As the work progressed, however, it soon became clear that the project would far exceed the planned costs, already reaching £100,000 by August 1651 with much to be done, which required more taxes to be raised. The Company became increasingly concerned about pushing down their costs; keeping their number of officers and rates of pay as low as possible. William Jessop, the Company accountant was sent down to the Fens to audit the works to identify any wasteful practices¹⁴. Expenditure was scrutinized in ever more detail at their meetings. In August, to avoid cash flow problems, the Company agreed *that five or more of the Companie, or others, doe take up £10000 upon their security to bee kept in chest for the service of the Companie*¹⁵.

Another problem was that the Company members were also required to pay taxes and tithes for their land to the Commonwealth. Mr Carill claimed he had to pay tax at 4 times the rates for his Adventurer lands compared to other landowners nearby²⁸, and, in May 1652, *they offered £1000 a yeare in lieu of taxes to the Commonwealth in consideration whereof that the Countrie may not lay taxes upon any part of the 95000 acres designed to them by Acte of Parliament*¹⁶. A petition was drawn up in January 1653 to issue to the Committee of the Army that *in consideration of their vast charges and expences in dreyning of the said Fennes, there being 300000 acres nowe equally improved now for that the inhabitants of the severall parishes in the said countyes doe tax and rate your petitioners said landes as 10 tymes more*

then they doe theire owne remayninge landes of the same quallitye and goodnes and some of your petitioners are taxed for the same landes in severall parishes Our petitioners therefore humbly pray that the same proportions may bee observed in taxinge both the Adventurers landes and the other dreyned landes remayninge to the Country and that the disproportionable rates aforesaid may bee redressed¹⁷.

In April 1654 this issue was considered again; the Company were to *endeavour that the tax may not exceede eight score [£160] poundes a month when the tax of the nation comes to £120000 a month and to raise it or abate it pro rata¹⁸*. A petition was drawn up to issue to Oliver Cromwell the Lord Protector that *the Companie shall propound to the state £1000 a yeare in lieu of tithes for the 95000 acres¹⁹*. The Company also offered to arrange the *sending of godly ministers for preachinge of the gospell in the Great Levell of the Fennes and for obteyninge an order for that purpose for the exemption of the 95000 acres from the payment of the tithes in lieu of what shall bee proposed²⁰*.

Another important cost to the Company was the payments to the army to help the quell resistance to the drainage and one such payment of £500 was made to Mr Browne treasurer for the Army in Cambridge in May 1653 during the disturbances at Swaffham²¹.

In June 1653, the Company expressed their surprise that £10,000 recently raised had been spent so quickly with so little done. By November 1653, the finances had reached such a poor state, risking a further failure to pay the workers and a *clamour of the workmen*, that they were forced to ask the Adventurers to loan them money in advance of future taxes and, in return, a 6% interest would be paid. This would raise £1600²³. After Oliver St John overturned the management of the project In August 1654, a financial assessment was carried out which showed £99553 had been raised in taxes in the period March 1650 to March 1652 and in the following year a further £33843 had been raised whilst nearly £6000 of unpaid taxes remained unpaid²⁴. In the previous year, £20997 further had been spent (the overall cost, therefore, was in excess of £150,000 not including the costs before March 1650).

The Lord Protectors *Ordinance for the Preservation of the Works of the Great Level of the Fens* issued in May 1654²⁷ gave the Company greater powers for the collection of their taxes including the seizure of the landowners goods and sequestration of their land, and subsequently they pursued non-payment of taxes with more force²⁹. This included the appointment of three bailiffs (William Lettany, William Whittlesey and Joseph Davies) to have *the power and authority to distryene upon the lands of the said proportions ... in default ...occasioned by such distresse so sequester and receive the profitts ... for satisfyinge of the said tax²⁵*. Sequestration of land, however, proved to be ineffective and caused *trouble and disquiet of the tennants³⁰*, and the Company was again forced to borrow money in advance of future taxes in May 1655 to the sum of £9500 (27 of the Adventurers agreed to lend this money)²⁶. In January and February 1656 very large sales of defaulters lands (27 separate sales) were undertaken which shows the very large scale of failure to pay taxes, many of the defaulters having failed to pay taxes for several years. Overall, a large proportion of the Adventurers lands were sold over the course of the project and the final ownership of land bore little resemblance to how it had been in 1649. For many of the Adventurers the costs of funding the project had been so high that their finances had not allowed them to carry on to realise their promised reward of land. Instead, the benefits were gained by the investors who came in toward the end of the project and had not incurred most of the costs.

To put the expenditure into context the national budgets during this period was £1.2 to £1.5 million compared to expenditure on the drainage peaking at over £100000 per year. A list of land owned by key Adventurers owned in 1655/56 is provided in the Appendix 5.

The Adjudications

The adjudication on the drainage works to the north of the Bedford River took place on the 21st March in Wisbech and 24th March 1651 in Peterborough, and the adjudication of the area to the south of the Bedford River took place on the 24th March 1653 (also known as the final adjudication). Following the requirements of the Act of Drainage, they required the Company to demonstrate to the Lord Commissioners appointed by the Act that the drainage had been completed successfully, which entailed visits to sites and hearings of witnesses for and against. Failure to gain successful adjudications would result in the Adventurers not receiving their reward of land, despite the enormous expense they had laid out which would be ruinous to many. Consequently, no expense was spared in making arrangements for the adjudications.

A committee was set to make arrangements set up in February 1651¹ which included many of the most influential Adventurers and later this month warrants were *read in all parish churches on the north side of Bedford River and partes adjacent*² to announce the forthcoming adjudication and 200 copies of the warrant were printed and distributed for the same purpose. Horses and coaches were arranged for travel of the Adventurers and Commissioners to the Fens³. The Company also requested that the Earl of Bedford attend the adjudication⁴.

Preparations for the final adjudication were far more elaborate. In February 1652, a committee was once more set up to organise the event⁵, the same group of men as had convened for the 1st adjudication. A hundred printed papers were made *ready to be reade in all churches through the whole south levell giving notice of the tyme and place of meetinge of the Comissioners in order to an adjudication*⁶. Mr Jessop, the Company receiver, was *authorized to issue out and paie all such some and sums of mony as well in towne and out of towne in order to the journey to Elie touchinge the adjudication as hee shall conceive necessary to bee layd out*⁷. A Mr Dunne was appointed to arrange accommodation for the Lord Commissioners⁸ who was later helped by Mr Walker, Mr Holman and Jonas Moore and all Company members were asked to *give their personall appearance and attendance upon the Companie, morninge and eveninge untill they adjourne into the levell*⁹. Horses and coaches were also offered to all Company members who wished to attend the adjudication at the Company's expense¹⁰. Mr Jessop was ordered to go down with the Lords Commissioners on the 21st March, carrying £200, and to take up £400 more at Cambridge to meet expenses on their journey to Ely¹¹, and Mr Bradley was ordered to husband the Commissioners journey¹². The Commissioners had summonsed their own witnesses and the Company ordered that 100 warrants be issued and printed at the Company's charge¹³. Anthony Hamond was requested to provide 2 or 3 boats at Earith for the reception of the Commissioners¹⁴ and it was arranged that a Mr Peters would deliver a sermon at the start of the adjudication¹⁵. Mr Thurloe was asked to procure a letter from the Lord Generall Cromwell to require his troops quartered at Elie to meet the Commissioners and accompany them to Elie¹⁶.

For anyone who had organised a large business event for an important client, this flurry of activity is all too familiar.

The Places in the Fens

The minute books provide many details of how the drainage works affected the people of various parts of the Fens.

Cambridge

The primary concern of Cambridge about the drainage works was related to navigation on the River Ouse and Cam (River of Grant) because these rivers provided an important transport and trade routes to the town. In June 1650, Sir Cornelius Vermuyden's design was shown to the University of Cambridge to give them an opportunity to make their objections¹. In April 1651² then April, May and June 1652³ the Company sent Sir Cornelius Vermuyden letters to remind him of the importance of navigation to the university and town of Cambridge, and a further letter was sent to Sir Cornelius Vermuyden in July 1652 informing him of *complaint by the barge men which carry coles to Cambridge by reason that the new cutt at Russell Hill is so straight that the boates of 16 or 17 foote wide cannot passe as formerly and that the new cutt wants a bottome in some part of it which hinders boates of burden to passe and they therefore desire you to take it into your present care and to give such speedy order therein as there may bee noe just cause of complaint against the Companie*⁴.

The Company met at the Sign of the Bear Inn in Cambridge on August 1652 and during their stay they received complaint that *theire water carriages are raised 3d penny by reason of the prejudice to the navigation by the Companies dreyninge, which Sir Cornelius Vermuyden (with confidence) is ready to mainteyne to bee better and not worse by the dreyninge and that this is a designe of the watermen who duringe the tyme the workes were in hand and navigation hindered having raised the price doe still contynue it up, to the wronge both of the Universitye and towne and espetially of the Companie*⁵. The Company met the deputy vice chancellor of the University as well as the mayor of Cambridge to discuss these issues⁶.

Sir Cornelius Vermuyden's design for the navigation to Cambridge is described in his submission to the final adjudication in Ely; firstly: *a navigable sasse att Erith upon the said old river of Owze to preserve that navigation. Secondly I thought it necessary to shutt out the tydes from cominge the old way up to Harrimore by a dam made over the old Owze nere Salters Loade, leavinge to the tyde the new channel aforesaid and the whole wash to play over, and then rather because the outfall would bee the better preserved and the towne of Lyn should have no cause to complayne that any damage should come to theire haven by the reason of this dreyninge, placinge a double sasse near the said dam of twenty fower foote waterway with freshwater dores thereby to bee able both to hold in and lett goe the water as there should bee occasion and preserve the navigation from Cambridge; also I caused a watergagge to bee sett upon this said river nere Elie at a place called Russell Hill to keep up the water att a gage and then made a little cutt by about a myle in length sufficient for boates to passe att all tymes and which is fedd with water sufficient from Grant river to supply it by reason of the narrownes now it is of so that the navigation is now better and more certaine then formerly. Overall. he argued navigation had been improved by maintaining a deeper channel and halving the distance to the sea.*

Concerns about navigation to Cambridge continued, however, and John Maynard's petition to Parliament against the drainage works referred to this issue, but the Company argued that the disruption had been temporary and navigation had in the end been improved, even in the severe drought that occurred the previous year⁸.

The Company met again at the Sign of the Rose Inn in Cambridge in December 1652 and later met the representative of the army in Cambridge. Several criminal and civil trials related to the Company's business took place in Cambridge.

Cambridge was also an important business and administrative hub for the delivery of the drainage works; providing accommodation, army barracks, court houses and meeting places⁹. Several of the Adventurers came from Cambridge and the surrounding area, including Mr Carrill, John Crane, Mr Spalding and

Colonell Castell¹⁰. Provisions for the Scottish prisoners of war were sourced from Cambridge¹¹. The county sessions there were used to prosecute escaped prisoners of war and rioters. The turf cut near Ramsey by the commoners on Adventurers' land ended up in Cambridge and activities about its recovery and prosecution of the offenders was centred there¹².

Peterborough

When the drainage work started in 1649, much of the work took place around Peterborough and a meeting took place there in July¹³ to set out plans for the work, followed by a general meeting in early August. The first work undertaken on the drainage works was to build up the bank of Moreton's Leame between Peterborough and Guyhurne¹⁴ which was soon suspended because of lack of funds but this resumed in 1650.

The adjudication on the level north of the Bedford River took place at Peterborough at the *Sign of the Angell Inn* on the 24th March 1651. Further meetings of the Company took place in Peterborough in July 1651 and August 1652 (again at the *Sign of the Angell*).

In May 1651, it was reported that *the Country were about raising mony to hinder their proceedings* in the Soake of Peterborough¹⁶.

The Scottish prisoners of war who were marched down from York were received by the Company at Peterborough in November 1651¹⁷.

Ely

Early on in the minute books in June 1649, the Company received 3 petitions from the Isle of Ely recommending Lieutenant Colonel Dodson as Director of Works¹⁸. After this, because the early work concentrated on the north of the Bedford River, Ely is not referred to again until the Company met at the *Sign of the Bell Inn* at Ely in August 1652¹⁹ then, later that year, Thomas Moore, the clerk comptroller was made resident at Ely after the balance of the work moved to the south²⁰. In December 1652, Sir Cornelius Vermuyden is described to have made his design for the works on the south side at Ely²¹, and in 1653 the Company's response to the disturbances at Swaffham were based in Ely where the army officers were quartered²².

The final adjudication was held in Ely on the 24th March 1653 also at the Sign of the Bell²³. The Dutch prisoners of war were transferred from Yarmouth to Ely in June 1653 before they began their work for the Company²⁴.

A further meeting was held at the White Hart in Ely on the 18th July 1653 and on the 4th October 1653 it was *Ordered that Mr Dalton shall have an allowance of twenty poundes a yeare for the use of his howse at Elie and ten poundes a yeare for a chamber and studdie for the clarke to preserve the recordes and writings of the Companie untill further order and the said allowance is to begin from the sixth of September last, being the tyme the Companie first mett at the said howse*². Eventually, Ely became a second administrative centre for the Company alongside London and several further meetings²⁷ were held there during the remaining period of the minute books.

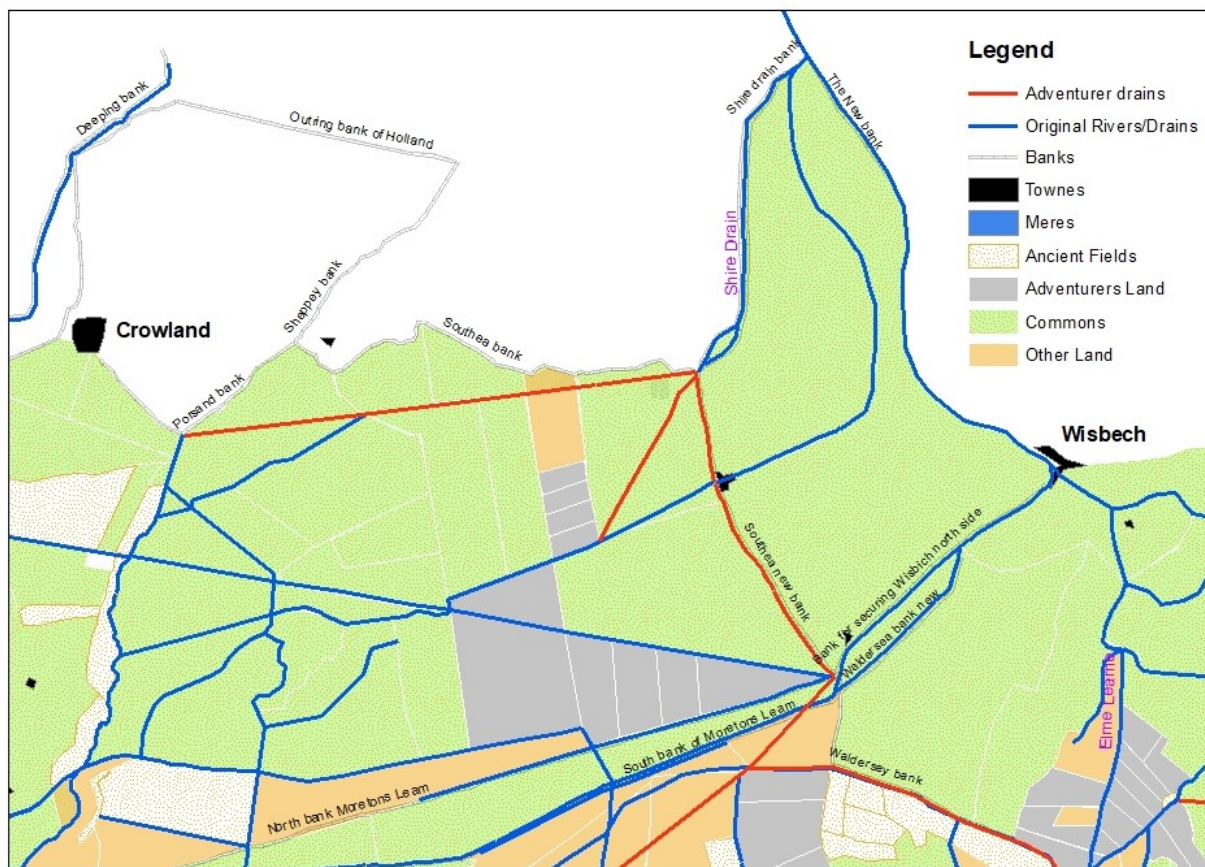
Wisbech

The Company met at the *Sign of the Black Bull* in Wisbech on the 7th and 8th August 1649, in March 1650, 21st March 1651 (the opening day of the adjudication of the level north of the Bedford River), July 1651 and in August 1652²⁸.

Several long standing issues developed at Wisbech related to the demolition of the old Horseshoe Sluice and construction of new banks, sluices and bridges, within and close to the town. In June, July and September 1650, the Company met landowners at Wisbech to make an agreement related to these new drainage works and in relation to the maintenance and repair of pre-existing works which landowners had managed before²⁹. An agreement was made by which the landowners would make a financial contribution to the Company in return for their services. In October³⁰, the Company identified the sea banks near Wisbech as being in a dangerous state of repair and, therefore, a great risk to their work. Repair of these banks had been the responsibility of the inhabitants to the north of Wisbech but they refused to do the work. The Company conscious of the dangers of the bank collapsing and flooding their works to the south, decided to, at once, repair these banks rather than take the matter to the Commissioners; a frustration to them because of the cost as well as delays to other work they had to complete. In November, the Company, however, agreed to contribute £200 to the town of Wisbech for the construction of a bridge, provided that the town agreed to its maintenance and repair. In response, Wisbech demanded £300³¹. Captain Fisher on the behalf of the town agreed to build the bridge, *and that the middle arch bee prepared with a draw bridge for sayles fitt for navigation*.

In January 1651, the town claimed that Sir Cornelius Vermuyden had disadvantaged them by taking up a sluice that stood between Wisbech and the Horseshoe sluice, and thereby impaired transport to Marshland³². In January 1651, the town complained that a Company sluice was set too high *so that the water contynues so high still in those marshes that they feare that they shall loose the next somers profit, which will cause some clamour on us though the fault bee their owne, but will certainly make them backward in contributinge their proportion to that worke accordinge to their agreement*³³ and in February a Captain Harrison claimed the Company had harmed the town by cutting a bank³⁴. The relationship between the Company and Wisbech from then on was poor and this remained the case for the remaining period of the minute books.

In March 1651, Immediately after the adjudication of the north side of the Bedford River that took place in Wisbech, the Adventurer's Sir Edward Partherich, Mr Hamond and Mr Crane and Colonell Castell were asked to meet representatives of the town to seek a resolution of their differences³⁵ but in April the town requested that the agreement about making a draw bridge be suspended, *having made several complaintes against the Company*³⁶. In July the Company again sought to *reconcile the differences betweene the Companie and the towne of Wisbech, as also the differences betweene the owners of the north side of Wisbech and the Companie, and to use a means to the obteyninge the money owinge from the owners of the north side of Wisbech*³⁷. In August, the Company sought advice from Lord Chief Justice St John about how to resolved these differences, particularly *touchinge the repayre of the banks between Bevis Hall and Guyhurne*³⁸. In December 1651, the Company asked John Thurloe, who was based in Wisbech, to address these issues³⁹ (after this, Thurloe became the key contact with the town).



Map 10 The northern part of the Great Level between Crowland and Wisbech

The outcome of these events was that the Company believed they were owed £700 by the town and Mr Hamond was asked to *call upon Captain Fisher and others of the towne of Wisbech for £700, which the Companie sent them, as also for their proportion due for the sluices below the Clowe, that the same may be forthwith paid*, and by February 1652 this increased to £1500⁴¹. Despite further efforts to come to an agreement with the representatives of Wisbech⁴², the dispute continued and, in September, the Company wrote to the town in relation to the money paid to the town for a bridge in 1650 which had still not been constructed⁴³. The situation was then complicated by the desire of the town for the Company to do additional work on Elm Leam⁴⁴. By October this had become a legal dispute - *that Captain Fisher and others on the north side of Wisbich may bee sued to the outlawry for the mony owinge from that towne to the Companie*⁴⁴. By February the dispute had worsened: *It is now long since you should have performed your agreement made with the Earle of Bedford and his Participants touchinge the laying of two sluices in Tyd St Giles marsh. Therein, you must neede acknowledge their great patience this long to have forborne, eyther to arrest or outlaw you for your breach of agreement, they havinge thereby suffered nere £2000 damage. The Companie still desire to deale fairly and friendly with you and therefore will forbear to proceede against you by waie of arrest or outlaw and so as you will appoint your attorney to appeare and receive a declaration in the upper bench with an imparlance untill the next terme, hereby that Companie and you will goe fayrely on to a tryall and thereby prevent you great trouble and charge*. On the same day several residents on the northside of Wisbech were arrested - *Mr Edmund Farrer shall have an allowance of five poundes....as a gratuity from them for his paines in procuringe severall persons to bee arrested on the northside of Wisbich*⁴⁵.

In May 1654, the Company responded to a request from the inhabitants of Wisbech to erect a new sluice on the Shire Drain⁴⁶ and asked for the sum of £300 to undertake the work. The Company saw this as an opportunity to resolve their differences with the town and in June asked Captain Fisher for a meeting with

this in mind⁴⁷. In February, 1655, the Company solicitor was *authorized on the behalfe of the Companie to demand and receive of bond from the inhabitants of the north side of Wisbich all such sum and sums of money as is due and owinge to the Company from them*⁴⁸. In February 1656 a Mr Growse, on the behalfe of the north side of Wisbech asked the Companie *desiringe* to repair the sluice at Tydd but the Company replied that *they expecte the inhabitants of north of Wisbich should 1st performe their bargaine with the Companie and pay in the money which hath byn so longe owinge to them and for which a suyte hath byn dependinge*⁴⁸.

The relationship between the Company and the town of Wisbech was therefore fractious throughout the almost all of period of the minute books. The Company, however, required the locals to maintain and repair the existing drainage infrastructure such as the sea defences, and the residents required the Company to maintain their assets including sluices and drains. Consequently, despite the 'standoff' over money, neither side could disengage from the other.

Over

Complaints about the effects of the drainage works on the people of Over were first raised in June 1651 about a dam designed by Sir Cornelius Vermuyden⁴⁹, and in December Jonas Moore was asked to go there to survey the lands cut through by the works to estimate compensation to be paid for the damage⁵⁰. In January 1652 the people of Over were reported *very clamorous here against the Companie* in relation to lands cut⁵¹.

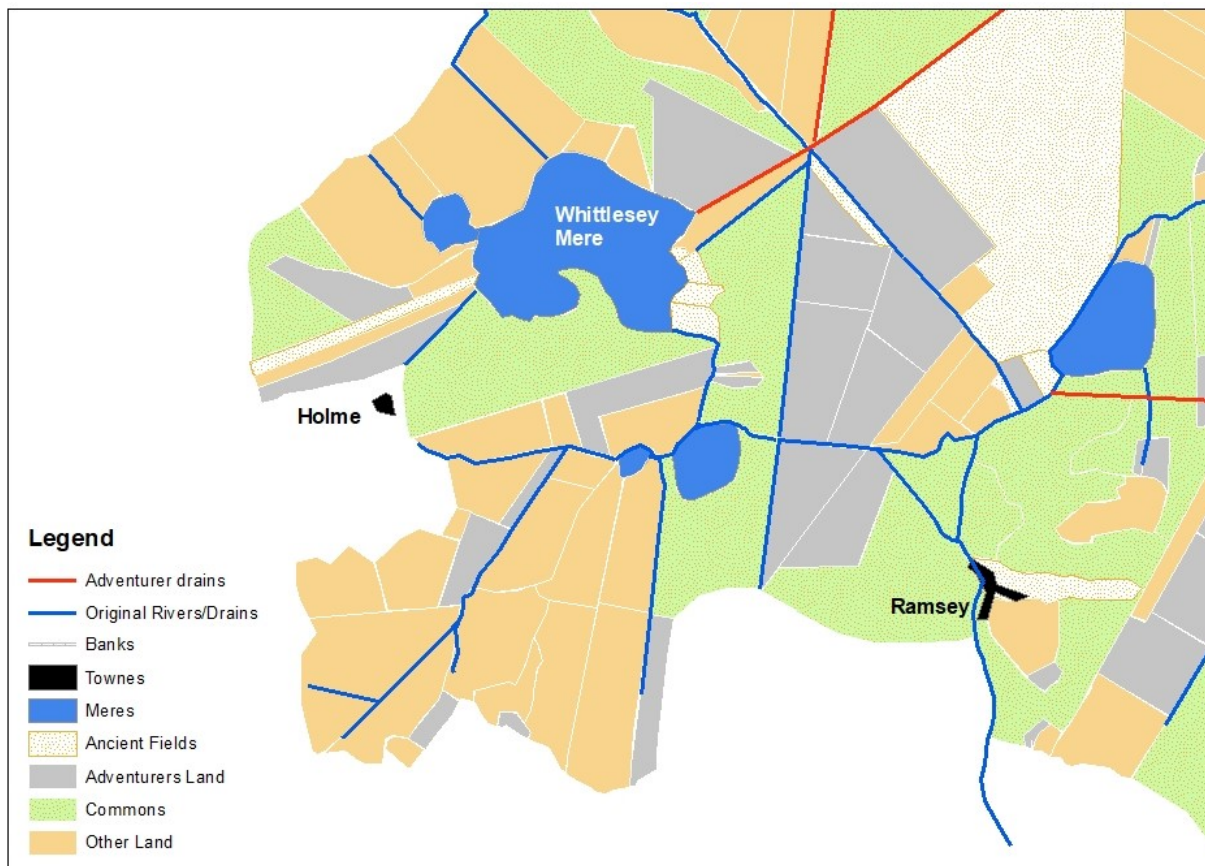
In February 1652, the inhabitants delivered a paper to the Company⁵² listing the damage done which included the *raising of the bancke and cutting the river and ditch...For their damages in hindering their navigation..., For their damages in hindering their navigation....the great danger of casting men away in the water, their havinge great experience byn thereof lately had already.. and concerne that their said grownds now are not and nor never will be one penny the better for the dreyning thereof*. The Company replied that *if they doe conceive they are exempted out of the Acte of Parliament and not contributing towards dreyning, then the Companie doe not seem fitt to admitt of a treaty with them but if otherwise they doe, the Company desire Mr Hamond, Sir Cornelius Vermuyden and Mr Drewry to treat with them and report the result of their discourse forthwith*⁵³. Over was on the edge of the area covered by the Great Level so perhaps there was some debate about whether they should even be included in the project.

The situation changed dramatically on the 5th March 1652 when Oliver Cromwell intervened, requesting a meeting to discuss the petition from Over⁵³, and to satisfy the concerns Major General Disbrow (Fleetwood), an important general in the civil war, who appears to have had direct land interests near the town. The Company, including Sir Cornelius Vermuyden, met Cromwell and then Disbrow a week later⁵⁴.

In June 1652, the Adventurers, Mr Hamond and Mr Walker were asked to enter discussions with the town of Over to resolve these differences and report back to the Company⁵⁵. In addition, referees were nominated to resolve the dispute which included Major General Disbrow and Major West to represent the town⁵⁶. The Company was, therefore, put in the difficult position that men of great influence in the Commonwealth, possibly supported by Oliver Cromwell, were on the opposing side of the dispute.

A Mr West, representing the town, issued a petition for damages in May 1653 to the Company related to land cut, navigation harmed and poor growth of their crops which amounted to £3133, plus damage caused by floods of £1500 which could rise to £10,000. The Company rejected these claims, asserting the navigation to the sea was *improved by being so shortened and that their works had benefited the town*. These benefits included their meeting the cost of repairing and maintaining the banks which had

*possession and that they have not done any acte against or doe oppose it, they now only desire redres for unequall settinge out of land. They are willinge that the workes of dreyninge should goe on, so as they receive noe prejudice thereby*⁶⁴. The matter was discussed at the meeting of the Lord Commissioners in June 1651⁶⁵.



Map 12 The western part of the Great Level around Holme and Ramsey

As part of the agreement between the Company and Mr Henley (see **Robert Henley**), 463 acres of the 963 acres Company's land in Holme Fen were transferred to him in June 1651 (not including the part of this land intended to be a receptacle)⁶⁶. This parcel of land was later transferred to a Colonel Sydney in February 1652⁶⁸.

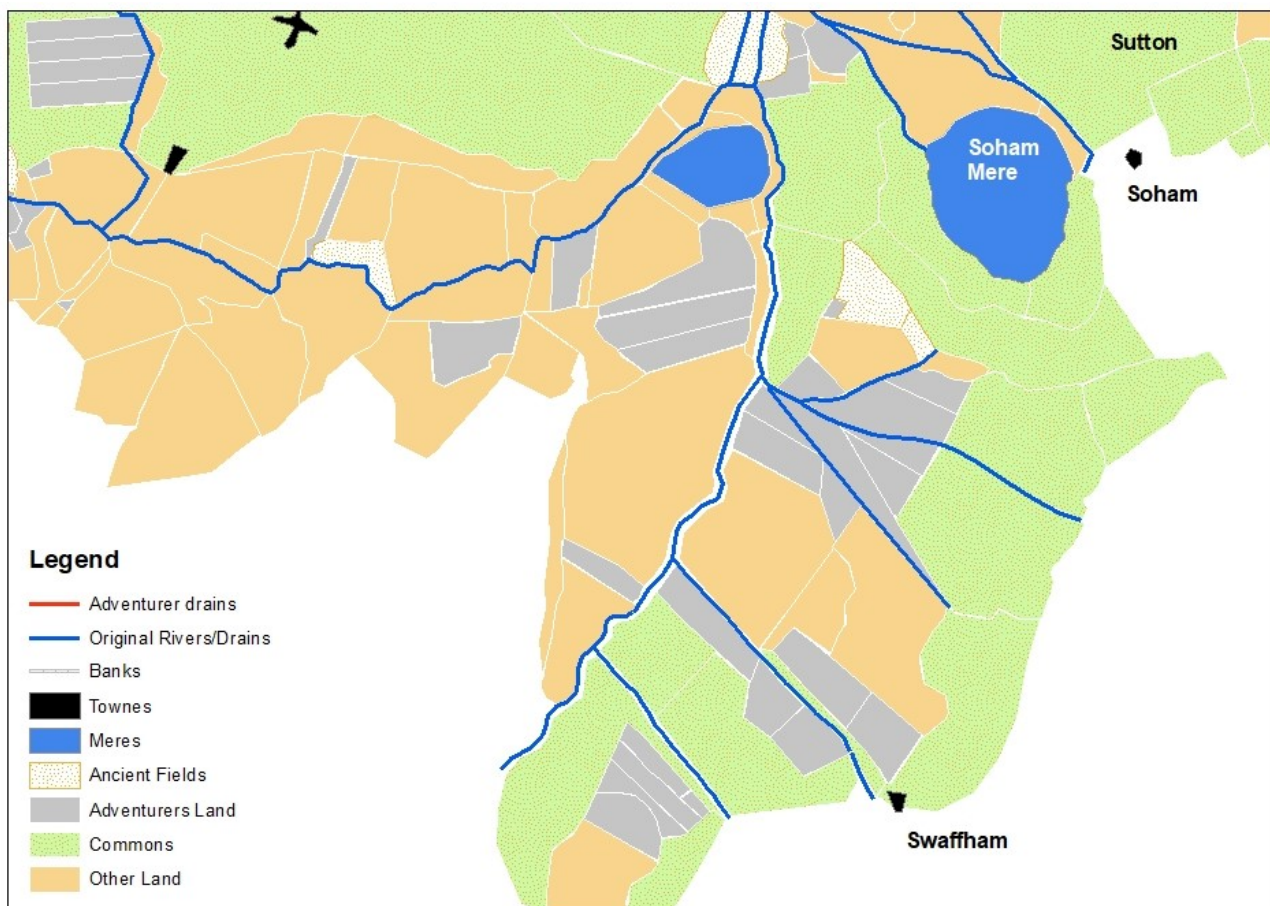
In February 1652 a further 500 acres of Holme Fen, now in the hands of the Company, were withdrawn from sale and instead *preserved and kept for publique use*⁶⁷, and in March 1652 a lease was arranged for an area of the land belonging to the Earl of Westmorland that had been cut⁷. In April a lease was issued on 300 acres in the Holme Fen receptacle for £90 rent⁷⁰. In May 1652 the town was pursued over the failure to make this payment⁷¹ and in February 1653, Anthony Hamond was asked to contact a Mr Turner of Eybury for the payment of same £90 rent⁷². In November 1653, it was decided that the 300 acres leased to the town would be leased to Mr Henley instead once the lease had expired on Lady Day⁷⁴. Subsequently, the lease was instead transferred to Mr Fountayne in February 1654. Holme Fen was then divided up later in the year, taking into account buildings that Mr Henley had already put down there.

In June 1653, the Company proposed to issue the remaining 500 acres of Holme Fen to Mr Henley in lieu of other land in Woodwalton than had been due to be transferred to him, following his agreement with Sir Cornelius Vermuyden (see **Robert Henley**). This order was, however, found to conflict with a previous order that this area of land was to be preserved for public use, so it was proposed that this could be settled once there was a meeting of a sufficient number of Adventurers to reverse the previous order⁷³.

In May 1652, the Company considered the cost of building a bridge over the 19 foot drain at Holme and in October 1652 the 12 foot dike at Caldecot and Holme was ordered to be scoured.

Swaffham

In September 1652, a letter was received from Thomas Raintree about the *throwinge in of the dike of Swaffham Fenne* which began a long period of disturbance in the area⁷⁶ (see **Resistance**). The Company responded by ordering that *the actors therein to be severely proceeded with which the Companie doe accordingly intend to serve as any of their names bee discovered and till when they cannot give any perticular direction other then to desire your effectuall and speedy endeavors to finde out the names of those who threatened Raintree and to retorne them to the Companie with the perticular growndes of charging the facte upon them that the matter may bee put into a way of a prosecution*. Again, in October 1652 and January 1653⁷⁷, they pushed to find out the names of the offenders with a view to prosecution. A squadron of horse was ordered to be requested from the officer in chief in Ely to be quartered closeby, to suppress further riots which the Company would fund⁷⁸. This, however, did not prevent further trouble and on the 20th April 150 men assembled in Swaffham and *expelled the workmen and threw in the dikes made by them and threatened them and others involved in the work*⁷⁹. This information was sent to Oliver Cromwell with a request that he intervene and, in response, he sent his own troop under the command of Major Parker. The Company ordered that the troops would only be removed when the damage was repaired at the town's own expense⁸⁰. In June 1653 there is further reference to *unruly people about Swafham, Soham and other parts .. have assembled in a riotous and tumultuous manner and throwe downe the dikes and sluces*⁸¹. In October the Company received notice that speeches had been given in nearby Soham and Wicken that they would throw in all the Adventurers dikes on notice given by the ringing of a bell⁸².



Map 13 The south-eastern part of the Great Level around Swaffham and Soham

In June 1653 it was proposed by the Company *to house Dutch prisoners or war at Swafham, Waterbeach and other parts most averse to the Company*, presumably because soldiers had already been quartered there following the riots. In July, they were informed that the prisoners *not onely refused to worke but are encouraged by the people of Swafham, Waterbeach and Cottenham ... to run away, endanger them in the corne and the officers who indeed are careful to ride after them*⁸⁴.

The Company is reported to have taken distress at Swafham in 1654 (recovery of penalties by confiscating land or property) presumably in relation to the recent troubles and damage caused⁸⁵.

Downham

In a letter from Mr Best in February 1651, the Company were informed of *damages hee sustayned by certaine tymler suffered to lye in Downham Parke*.

In May 1651 a bank was cut about Downham and the Company enquired whether it was *a finished banke or noe and the name of such as presumes to cutt it with all the circumstances...*⁸⁷

A dozen soldiers were quartered at Downham in February 1654 to form a guard of the sluices at Salters Lode⁸⁸.

Company meetings were held in Downham on the 4th and 5th July 1650.

Earith

In January 1651, a cut was made on the *Erith bancke*⁹⁰ and the Company asked for it to be *speedily taken for making up this said cutt that it may be farre stronger than formerly it was*. In May 1651 *certain howses standinge in and about Erith which by reason of the lyne already drawne, and in regards of the workes now in hand, may come into damage and prejudice* and accordingly the Company planned to offer compensation⁹¹.

The Scottish prisoners of war were delivered to Earith in October 1651⁹².

Mr Drewry of Erith was *employed in preserving the banckes* and in return would be allowed to feed his sheep there⁹³. A breach in the river bank associated with the straightening of the *old Owze* is mentioned in November 1651 which they *apprehend must be the reason of the late breach*⁹⁴ which is referred to again in April 1652 - *that northe banke bee well serviced for they are very fearfull that unles some speedy course be taken for the direction of the water of Ouse or giving it some larger passage there may happen some breach again about Erith*. In May 1652 the Company report that *the earth remayninge and cast upon the south side of the new Bedford River to supply a foreland nere unto the dam by the Hermitage at Erith is very loose and false and ... is in danger to bee washed away to the prejudice and stopping of the said river*⁹⁵.

One of the store houses for the materials for the works was located at Earith⁹⁶. Some of the pay days were held at Earith, some of which resulted in disorder because insufficient money was brought there to pay all the workers (April and August 1652)⁹⁷.

A Company meeting was held at Mr Seeley's house at Earith in August 1652⁹⁸.

Sutton

The inhabitants of Sutton were particularly active in seeking redress from the Company through correspondence with them and by petitions sent to the Commissioners. In March 1651, they proposed to exchange several Adventurer lands close to the town with other lands for which the loss would harm them less⁹⁹. The inhabitants also sought redress for damage that occurred in the *1st Undertaking*¹⁰⁰. The diking out of Sutton Meadlands to the south west of the town were suspended in advance of a review of the demands by the Commissioners¹⁰¹ and, later, the town offered to buy back this land. In regard to the valuation of this land, the Company officer Robert Burton and others sought to find out its value before the works of drainage in the time of the King¹⁰², and eventually compensation was made. In May 1652 a further petition was received to stop the diking out of Sutton Meadlands and, instead, to sell it back to them or take a yearly rent for the land. In June 1652 an order of agreement was made between the Company and the town and the diking out of Sutton Meadlands was ordered to proceed¹⁰⁵. There was, however, a further disagreement about the acres laid out and Jonas Moore was instructed to survey the area to make sure this had been done correctly¹⁰⁶. Disputes about Sutton Meadlands went on for several years and eventually were considered by referees as late as 1656¹⁰⁷.

A further petition was received related to release of the flood water back to the new Ouse - *they doe very much complayne of the great store of water on the south side of Bedford river occasioned by water of Owse, in so much as they are in great danger to loose or at least hazard this theire sumer crop*¹⁰³, *also complaining about* land cut¹⁰⁴ and their need for bridges over the Ouse to enable access to their land¹⁰⁵. A partly constructed bridge at Earith was offered by the Company to meet their demands.

Two pay days took place at Sutton in 1652¹³³.

Denver

Correspondence between the Company and the inhabitants of Denver took place over several years related to compensation for lands cut in creating Downham Eau and regarding the provision of bridges to allow them access to their lands¹⁰⁸. Part of the land affected land had been given to the church¹⁰⁹ and a revenue was offered by the Company to the incumbent in perpetuity to cover their losses. Jonas Moore was ordered to survey the land cut¹¹⁰ and, eventually, the sum of £120 was paid to the town¹¹¹.

Ramsey

An important event that occurred near Ramsey was the cutting of 1500 acres of turf on the Adventurers lands in November 1652 (see **Resistance**)¹¹². Unused turf left on the land was estimated to be worth £500 (including land cut at Woodwalton and Upwood) and Mr Jeffrey Hawkins of Ramsey was authorized to seize and take into his possession the cut turf and *sell it at the best rate for the advantage of the Companie*¹¹³ and, later, *a petition of submission of some inhabitantes of the towne of Ramsey acknowledge thereof, the cutting of turffe of the Adventurers partes*. The Company ordered *theire sollicitor forthwith to goe to speedy tryall att Westminster*¹¹⁴ *but if they will restore the value of the whole turffe or the turffe in kinde, are willinge to remitt the other damage*. In February 1652 the Company directed *that if the inhabitants would eyther present the Lords of the Mannor of theire neighbours to send the Commission to assigne other land in quantity and quality in lieu of that cutt into turffe puts, the Companie will release their action against them, otherwise not if they refuse to do this, the Companie doubt not the Commissioners will doe it of themselves*¹¹⁵. Jonas Moore was ordered to survey the lands damaged and areas close by, with a view to new lands being allocated to the Adventurers¹¹⁶.

In May 1652, the Company impounded cattle for being on their land owned by the Adventurer Thomas Alleyn near Ramsey, and legal action was taken by the owners against him, the expense of the defence covered by the Company¹¹⁷.

In May 1653 the sum of £135 was paid to the inhabitants of Ramsey as compensation for land cut¹¹⁸.

Soham

Opposition to the drainage works occurred in June 1653; *that severall unruly people about Swafham, Soham and other parts of the south side of the Great Levell of the Fennes have assembled together in a riotous and tumultuous manner and throwne downe the dikes and sluices belonginge to the Adventurers landes and disturbe them in their possession, contrary to the law, in that case provided, and to the endangeringe the peace of the Comon Wealth, you are therefore to give order to the Comander in Chiefe of any of the troops of horse in your regiment with quarter most convenient to repaire into the parts aforesaid and to use his endeavor to disperse the above said or other the like or unlawfull assemblies and to aydinge and assistinge to the justices of peace or other civill magistrates in bringing the offenders to punishment and for preventinge the like disorder for the future*¹¹⁹. In October, *Upon the information of Mr George Barnes that severall persons whose names hee can discover give out in speeches that they will throw in all the Adventurers dikes in and about Soham and Burway on Thursdaie next and will give notice thereof by ringinge a bell, it is ordered that a letter bee forthwith written to Mr Hamond of Soham, a justice of peace, givinge him tymely notice thereof to the intent he may take care to prevent any such insurrection.*

In February 1656, the Compnay proposed work to carry away water from Soham Mere in time of floods which they considered would particularly benefit the Manor of Soham owned by Mr Chicheley, so the Company engaged with him seeking a contribution to the work¹²¹.

Crowland

Even from Cambridge and Ely, Crowland at the northern edge of the Great Level was a remote place and events there show the region has a degree of autonomy. Early on in the project, in April 1650, the Earl of Exeter discharged the drainage workers from his land near Crowland and told them *their undertaking would come to noe effect*¹²². In May, this event was described as a *disturbance of the workes in the fennes nere Croyland*¹²³. Also in May, the Countess of Exeter complained *that the River Welland had been stopped by the works at Croyland much to her prejudice*¹²⁴. Anthony Hamond was ordered to meet the Countess and report back to the Company, taking care that nothing had been done against the Act of Draining and, shortly afterwards the Company sought to accommodate her by making a new dike.

In April 1651, following a riot near Crowland, Colonel Walton was asked by the Company to *displace Captain Kendall of Crowland and appoint him some other place of command in regards he was and still is an opposer of the proceedings of the Companie and the workes around Croyland.*

Colonel Walton was again consulted in October 1651 *about stopping up the dams at Crowland in regard it is a busines of great concernment to the whole levell*¹²⁶. They deferred to his local knowledge in relation to installing two navigable sluices at Crowland and Guyhurne, *for the Company hath so great a confidence in your integrity and well wishes for the workes.*

Colonel Walton, however, did not always follow the Company's interests. In February 1652, *the Companie entred into some debate with Colonell Walton touchinge the banke cutt at Crowland through Dowsdale bancke to dreyne Porland, as the Companie were informed, whereupon hee said hee had noe intention to*

dreyne Porland but reserves it for accomodation of fish and fowle and no way to prejudice the levell by letting in any water¹²⁷, then on the 20th May 1652 the Company were informed: Whereas the Companie were enformed by a letter Mr Thurloe lately received from Richard Kendall of Croyland, dated 17th of May last, that Colonell Walton had given leave for the townesmen of the towne to cutt the bancke at the north side of the towne by which meanes the waters of Welland have free passage into the levell to the great prejudice of the Companie, and as they conceive contrary to the Acte of Parliament for dreyninge, whereupon it is ordered that the superintendent and Mr Latch bee desired to make dillgent search and (if by any meanes they may) enquire out the name of names of all such person or persons that have made the attempt and forthwith to send them up to the Companie. And they are further desired to see the said cutt speedily dammed up (if it cannot yet bee done) as also to appointe some honest men for the future may take care and looke to the preserveringe of the levell¹²⁸.

The Company were furious about this because it reversed the effects if their drainage works without them being consulted. They immediately wrote to Colonel Walton¹²⁹: *The Companie of Adventurers, takinge notice of the great charge they have willingly undergone att your request and beinge this daie informed by a letter from one of their officers that you have lately given leave to the townesmen of Croyland to cut the banke at the north ende of the towne that the waters of Welland may have free passage into the levell, which may not onely produce the like effectes as the other but may also bee interpreted to bee contrary to the Acte of Parliament and so beget a construction very inconvenient to the Companie and knowinge with all how apt some may be to make an Acte of the nature their president for the like in other places, which will much infirme the Companie affayres and beinge confident of your good and noble affection to the worke wherein, they are engaged both in refference to the publique and their owne private concernment. They have comanded mee to offer to your consideration the perticulers forgoinge with their desire that you will please not give way or countenance to the keepinge of any cut thereupon, or to the further cuttinge the bankes in eyther places before mentioned but rather to promote the makinge up of what is already cutt to prevent the likes for the future as you shall have opportunitye.*

Colonel Walton was summoned to meet the Company¹³⁰ where he must have eased their concerns because a normal relationship appears to have resumed shortly afterwards.

In July 1653 the construction of a twelve foot sasse was ordered to let boats into the town of Crowland¹⁰. The Dowsdale Bank was extended to take in the town of Crowland at an extra expense of £100.

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Appendix 1 List of attendees at the meetings of the Company of Adventurers

John Spilman	5 Mr Hamond Ward	19 John Arthur	51 Richard Gorges	330
Mr Claphorne	5 Richard Blackwall	19 James Ingram	60 Earl of Bedford	333
Mr Hewett	5 Sam Jones	19 Edward Russell	63 William Crane	356
William Hamond	5 Francis Forster	20 Thomas Jennings	63 John Latch	379
John Hallett	6 Sheriffe Underwood	20 Baldwyn Arthur	64 Robert Henley Snr	625
Marke Hildersley	6 Valentine Walton	20 William Adams		
Mr Annesley	6 Benjamin Weston	21 Doctor Fryer		
Mr Sayer	6 Raph Buskin	21 Isaac Jones		
Thomas Dey	6 William Mainston	21 William Say		
Doctor George Bate	7 Mr Downing	22 Thomas Thyme		
Mr Coney	7 Robert Herring	22 Thomas Culpeper		
Mr Partheriche	7 Thomas Chicheley	22 William Smith		
Thomas Bayles	7 Thomas Woodward	23 Henry Henne		
Alepard Jones	8 Arthur Evelyn	24 John Walker		
Clement Oxenbridge	8 Mr Dereham	24 William Underwood		
David Watkins	8 Matthew Holwothy	25 Oliver St John		
Earl of Arundel	8 Alexander Jones	26 Miles Sandys		
Mr Noell	8 Samuell Fortrey	26 Gilbert Gerard		
William Lake	8 Alexander Blake	28 Andrew Henley		
Mr Pembeton	9 Anthony Samuell	28 Mr North		
James Harrington	10 Mr Williams	31 Robert Hampson Snr		
Thomas Hampson	10 Samual Smith	31 Cornelius Vermuden		
William Jones	10 Thomas Draper	31 Robert Henley Jnr		
George Gascoigne	11 Edmund Whalley	32 Sir Cornelius Vermuyden		
Robert Wingfield	11 William Dodson	33 Thomas Alleyn		
Thomas Stanley	11 Robert Lane	34 John Thurloe		
Francis Bretton	12 Arthur Samuell	35 Thomas Bland		
Mr Parsons	13 John Bridges	35 John Marsham		
Mr Spalding	13 William Drewry	36 William Weston		
Richard Beverley	13 William Jessop	36 John Russell		
Adam Titchborne	14 Robert Staunton	37 Robert Castell		
Edward Cooke	14 Sidenham Lukins	39 John Trafford		
Mr Sydney	14 Timothy Neale	39 Anthony Hamond		
Mr Wakefield	14 Francis Underwood	41 John Carill		
William Goffe	14 Robert Gale	41 Thomas Browne		
John Mainston	15 Walter St John	42 John Trenchard		
Thomas Gardiner	15 John Potts	47 Marke Bradley		
Richard Swan	17 Edmund Page	48 John Fountayne		
Mr Naylor	18 Richard Holman	50 Edward Partheriche		

Appendix 2 List of meeting places of the Company of Adventurers

Meeting place	Comments
Lord Whittelockes howse nere Temple Barre	Early Company meetings before mid-June 1649
Robert Henley's house, Temple Bar, London	Many Company meetings 1649 to 1656
Middle Temple Hall	Occasional large meetings (the Lord Commissioners also met there)
Sign of the Black Bull Wisbech	Occasional meetings when Company travelled to the Fens
Sign of rhe Crowne St Ives	July 1651
Sign of the Bear Cambridge	August 1652
Sign of the Bell, Ely	August 1652, March 1653, March 1654
Mr Seeley's House, Earith	August 1652
Sign of the Angel, Peterborough	August 1652
White Hart Inn, Ely	July 1653
Mr Dalton's house, Ely	October 1653
Mr Fountaynes House in Boswell Court, London	1654
Lord Chief Justice St John's Chamber in Lincoln's Inn	1654-1655

Other places non specific places are listed (e.g. Downham, Wisbech, Peterborough).

Appendix 3 Company employees and officers

Name	Position
Adventurers	
Sir Cornelius Vermuyden	Director of Works (1650 ..)
William Russell, Earle of Bedford	Treasurer (only for a few days in 1649), Conservator of the North Level (1654..)
Robert Henley	Treasurer (1649 ..)
Lieutenant Colonel Francis Underwood	Expenditor (1650 - 1653)
Colonel Robert Castell	Comptroller (1649 ..)
Colonel Dodson	Director of Works (temporary - 1649)
Anthony Hamond	Comptroller (1650 .), Conservator of Middle South Level
John Latch	Comptroller (1650..)
Walter St John	Comptroller (1654..)
Richard Gorges	Conservator of Middle Level (1653-1654) bu employment of a deputy
Major Alexander Blake	Conservator of North Level (1653-1654)
William Drewry	Comptroller (1652 ...)
Commissary General Edmund Whalley	Conservator of the South Level (1654-1655)
Oliver St John	Conservator of the Middle Level (1654..)
John Evelyn	Deputy Conservator of South Level (1655..._
Employees	
John Hopkinson	Clerk (1649 ..)
George Smith	Clerk (1649-1651)
Mr Claphorne	Overseer general (1649..)
Robert Burton	Principal overseer (1650 - 1653)
William Palmer	Under surveyor (1650..)
William Lake	Clarke comptroller (1650..)
John Danyell	Under overseer (1650..)
William Jessop	Receivor and accountant (1650-1654)
Jonas Moore	Principal surveyor, Overseer of outfalls and sluices (1650..)
Arthur Tench	Clarke comptroller (1650 ..)
Mr Newton	Underoverseer (...1650)
John Cooley	Under surveyor
Josias Arlibont	Under surveyor
Thomas Browne	Solicitor
Edmund Welsh	Overseer, Principal Overseer
Hugh Ringwood	Overseer
Jeffery Hawkins	Overseer
George Barnes	Overseer, Bailiff
Robert Pinchbecke	Overseer of materials and keeper of the sasse
Thomas Moore	Clarke of contracts
John Watts	Keeper of Stanground Sluice
Henry Oliver	Keeper of Clowes Cross Sluice
Richard Kendall	Overseer, Bayliffe
Mr Turner	Overseer
Alexander MackDell	Messenger (Scottish prisoner of war)
George Dalton	Expenditor and Receivor
Thomas Bland	Solicitor
Lewis Godrey	Bailiff
Richard Goodson	Bailiff
Grabrielle Elyott	Bailiff
Captain Lane	Bailiff
John Kelsey	Overseer of the Scottish prisoners of war (1651 to 1652)
John Saffery	Keeper of the sasse at Well Creeke
William Watts	Keeper of the sluice at Stanground

Name	Position
Edmund Mott	Keeper of the sasses at Ely
Robert Larmer	Keeper of the sasse at the Hermitage
George Harvey	Tyd Goat
Thomas Wright	Undersurveyor
Mr Pighills	Undersurveyor
Mr Drewry	Keeper or materials and keeper of north bank of Bedford River
Mr Turner	Various roles

Dates are only given is a appointment and dismissal dates are given in the minute books

Appendix 4 Taxes raised by the Company of Adventurers

Day	Month	Year	Amount	Payments	Further information
11	6	1649	2s 6d	2 (15 d each) payments 25th June and 1st August	
28	1	1650	8s 9d	7 (15 d each) payments 11th Feb, 1st March, 1st April, 1st May, 1st June, 1st July, 1st August	1 month to pay then default
19	7	1650	5s	4 (15d each) payments 1st November, 1st December, 1st Jan, 1st Feb	1 month to pay then default
23	2	1651	5s	4 (15d each) payments 15th March, next 2 15th April, last 15th May	1 month to pay then default
9	4	1651	15d	1 - 15th May	1 month to pay then default
9	4	1651	15d	1 - 16th June	1 month to pay then default
9	5	1651	Half a crown	2 (15 d each) payments 15th July and 15th August	1 month to pay then default
25	6	1651	15d	1 - 8th July	1 week to pay then default
17	7	1651	2 15d taxes	1 - (15d each) 1st August and 1st September	2 weeks to pay then default
10	11	1651	15d	1 - 1st December	1 week to pay then default
13	2	1652	2 15d taxes	2 - 25th March, 26th April	by 14th April and 14th May
1	7	1652	15d	2 (7d 6 each) 20th July, 20th August	by 2nd August and 1st September
16	9	1652	4d	None specified	
2	12	1652	15d	2 (7d 6 each) 9th December, 14th December	14th December and 28th December
15	1	1653	2s 6d	3 (7d 06 by 25th Feb, 1s 3d by 26th March, 7d 06 26th April)	by 1st March, 1st April, 2nd May
24	2	1653	15 d	2 (7d 6 each) 1st June, 1st July	by 15th June, 15th July
23	6	1653	2s 6d	2 (12d 11th July and 11th August)	
18	8	1654	18d	2 (9d 1st Septembe, 9d 1st October)	by 10th Sept and 10th Nov
6	10	1654	3d	1 1st November	by 10th November
21	2	1655	5s	5 (12d 1st March, 1st June, 1st Sept, 1st Feb, 1st August)	by 2nd April, 2nd July, 2nd Oct, 2nd March, 3rd Sept)
29	5	1655	12d	1 (3rd Jan)	5th Feb
23	2	1656	12 d	1 (10th April)	1 payment
17	3	1656	12 d		1 payment

Appendix 5 Notable Lott holders 1655/1656

From Tax Roll 1656, containing detailed descriptions of the 95,000 acres of Adventurers' lands in the Bedford Level, created as an assessment of the Adventurers' tax to be collected in April 1656. Cambridgeshire Archives, KBLC/4/2/1/1

The land holdings listed below are only given for significant contributors to the management of the drainage of the Fens as mentioned by the *Proceedings of the Adventurers*. Others landowners held the majority of the Adventurer lands.

Name	Lott	Acres	Land holdings
William Drewrey	1	200	Somersham Common
	2	200	Whelpmore and Somersham
	8	2	Haddenham
	8	50	Westmore
	10	300	Mildenhall
	13	250	Mildenhall
Francis Underwood	1	318	Hilgey
Earl of Bedford	1	100	Thorney
Earl of Bedford (with Robert Castell)	13	300	Glatton and Holme
	20	3900	Thorney
John Trenchard (<i>claimed by Robert Henley</i>)	2	400	Methwold Common and Feltwell Fen
John Trenchard	4	754	Ramsey, Doddington and Feltwell
	4	153	Grunty Fen
	7	161	Feltwell
Sir Edward Partherich	3	135	Westmore
	6	250	Easymore
	6	100	Westmore
	13	115	Crouchmore
Robert Castell	3	65	Westmore
Anthony Hamond (<i>with Anthony Archer and Ed Rigby</i>)	5	265	Clowes Cross, Welney, Connington and Dereham
Anthony Hamond	9	300	Warboys, Ramsey and Swaffham
	12	534	Sutton, Swaffham, Woodwalton, Sawtry, Downham, Waterbeach, Whelpmore, Westmore, Elm Common
Cornelius Vermuyden	5	134	Witcham. Sutton and Wentworth
George Dalton	6	39	Well and Welney
	13	100	Whittlesea, Upwell
John Fountayne	6	402	Iselham, Dossington, Westmore, Well and Welney
Robert Henley's heirs	6	334	Wereham, Wretton and Stoke
	13	749	Mildenhall, Soham, Upwell, Warboys, Wereham, Whittlesey
	17	1000	Warboys, Benwick, Welney, Wisbech, Waterbeach, Hockwold & Wilton, Whittlesea
John Latch	7	200	Chatteris and Doddington
John Walker	8	1195	Haddeham, Sutton, Chatteris, Doddington, Hockwold and Mepal
John Walter (with Robert Henley)	18	569	Soham
Edward Whalley	8	300	Helgey and Southery
	13	60	Wicken
	18	212	Hockwold & Wilton, Wicken
Alexander Blake	9	359	Denver, Warboys, Ramsey, Doddington and Swaffham

Name	Lott	Acres	Land holdings
Valentyne Walton	9	113	Swaffham and Denver
William Weston	10	115	Radmore
	13	160	Stilton
Walter St John	10	448	Helgey and Southery, Burwell and Londoners Fen
John Thurloe (<i>with Walter St John</i>)	10	28	Littleport and Welmore
Richard Gorges	14	284	Warboys
	14	50	Westmore
	14	575	Sutton, Wisbech, Warboys. Londoners Fen
Oliver St John	17	680	Stont Fen, Manea, Feltwell, Westmore, March
William Goffe	18	400	Wisbech

References 1: The drainage works mentioned in the Proceedings of the Company of Adventurers (see maps 1 to 6 for Locations)

Date	No	Map Ref	Description
Map 3 - 1650			
28/03/1650	4	1	Double sluice of about 16 foote wide on the north banke of Bedford river near Welney
28/03/1650	4	2	Sluice about 3 foote square be sett upon the northe banke of Bedford River neare about the West Water for the release of water in the tyme of drought.
25/01/1650	4	3	Work to open Wisbech River
28/03/1650	4	4	Reparation of the sasse at Stanground
28/03/1650	4	5	Repairing of the sasse upon Well Creeke at Salters Lode
28/03/1650	4	6	Double sluice of about 16 foote wide to issue the downfall of plantwater and Bevills Leame
28/03/1650	4	7	A sluice of about 3 foote wide nere about Peterborough and another upon Whittlesey dike betweene Whittlesey and Thorney
28/03/1650	4	8	Enlarging and amending the sluice at Clowes Crosse for issuing the downfall through the Sheire drain
28/03/1650	4	9	The making and repairing of Burrough Banke
14/08/1650	4	10	2 sluices and the sasse about Denver to be set on the River Owse.
25/09/1650	5	11	Discussion with Wisbech about old sea banks
26/03/1651	8	1	Outer bank on the south side of Morton's Leam leadinge from Elderwell to Guiyhern be repaired
Map 4 - 1651			
02/07/1651	2	2	Making of a bridge at Sutton and Mepal
03/07/1651	8	3	Clowes Cross and New South Eau dreyne be perfected forthwith and north side of Mortons Leam bee made upp and strengthened
05/07/1651	3	4	Make two sufficient bridges at Sawtry one of 30 ft and the other of 25 ft upon the 40 foot and 30 foot drains at Ramsey
23/07/1651	2	5	Drain from Clowes Crosse to The Goat to bee bottomed as well as the banks
14/08/1651	2	6	Work on Shire Drain

Date	No	Map Ref	Description
14/08/1651	2	7	Work on North Bank of Bedford River
1651			Moore's drain created (or widened from existing watercourse). General information from text
06/10/1651	7	8	Stops and gravells anywhere upon the River Nene between Whittlesey Mere and Pophams Eau bee taken away
06/10/1651	7	8	Stops and gravells anywhere upon the River Nene between Whittlesey Mere and Pophams Eau bee taken away
06/10/1651	7	8	Stops and gravells anywhere upon the River Nene between Whittlesey Mere and Pophams Eau bee taken away
28/10/1651	2	12	Ordered that the 40 and 30 foot drain called Vermuydens draine be presently perfected
06/10/1651	3	13	Make a highway from Whittlesey to Upwood hardes with a twelve foote dike on each
06/10/1651	6	14	A highway be made from Somersham hard land unto Chatris hardes
May to October 1651		15	Construction of the Hundred Foot River
1651		16	Southey New Drain opened. General information from text.
1651		16	Underwoods drain developed. General information from text.
Map 5 - 1652			
15/03/1652	2	1	Pophams Eau and the 16 foote and 10 foote dreyne from Honey to Well be perfected
15/03/1652	6	2	The Shire drain is now ordered to be made 20 foot wide
26/03/1652	4	3	South banke of washes
13/04/1652	8	4	Flagging and amending of Waldersey bancke
23/04/1652	4	5	Stops and obstructions in Moretons Leame be forthwith taken away
14/05/1652	5	6	Bridge at the Hermitage bee sett downe forthwith
28/05/1652	4	7	North banke of washes - heightened
28/05/1652	4	8	Vermuydens Eau deepened
28/05/1652	4	9	Sluice be set down at Guyhurne for plant water
01/07/1652	2	10	Clowes Cross drain bee deepened as well as widened
1652 until July		11	Scouring and bottoming of 100 foot river. General interpretation of text.
03/07/1652	10	12	Scouring out of Munkes Lode from the Adventurers land to Sawtreys into Ug Mere.
02/08/1652	5	13	New drain south of Welches Dam
08/07/1652	7	14	Speedy care that old Elme Leam dreyne be scoured out
14/08/52 p.m	3	15	Over Vermuydens Eau, the 30 and 40 foot drain be made two horse bridges in the Comon Drane way at Puttockes drane and it leading to Copholder Bancke

Date	No	Map Ref	Description
18/08/1652	6	16	2 sluices at the end of the Shire drain next the sea that the silt be removed from the two doors
28/08/1652	4	17	Deepening of Moores drain
12/08/52 p.m	6	18	Deepening of Pophams Eau
28/08/1652	4	19	Deepening of Bevills Leam
02/08/1652	5	20	Stops and gravels that are anywhere upon the river of Neane between Whittlese Mere and Pophams Eau be taken away
02/08/1652	5	21	Stops and gravels that are anywhere upon the river of Neane between Whittlese Mere and Pophams Eau be taken away
02/08/1652	5	22	Stops and gravels that are anywhere upon the river of Neane between Whittlese Mere and Pophams Eau be taken away
23/09/1652		23	Lower part of Neane river shall answer in depth and wideness with the upper part of the same river
18/11/1652	4	24	Repairs to Croyland Bank
18/11/1652	6	25	Repairs to North Bank of Moretons Leam
02/08/1652	5	26	Road from Ramsey to the dam ove Nene
14/10/1652	10	27	Work on Marshland cut started
12/08/1652 p.m	6	28	Hamonds Eau perfected
02/08/1652	5	29	A highway be made from Whittlesey to Upwood hardes
02/08/1652	5	30	A high way is to be made all along the 16 foote dreyne
28/05/1652	4	31	A bridge be made over Downham Eau in Stow Comon
02/08/1652	5	32	A high way bee made from Somersham hard lands unto Chatris hards by the ferry
Map 6 1653			
27/01/1653	16	1	The deepening of Downham Eau
27/01/1653	16	2	Embanking of Stoake River
27/01/1653	17	3	Embanking of Brandon River
27/01/1653	17	4	Embanking of Mildenhall River
27/01/1653	18	5	The highway from Wicken to Reach Lode
27/01/1653	19	6	Highway fom Littleport to Salters Load
27/01/1653	19	7	Grunty Fen drain
27/01/1653	19	8	Highway Downham to Pymore
27/01/1653	19	9	Highway Mepal to Welches Dam
27/01/1653	23	10	Removing all weres and stops in the River Grant

Date	No	Map Ref	Description
31/01/1653	6	11	One highway from Southea bank to the north bancke of Moretons Leam by the Adventurers growndes in Sutton fen by Gold Dike of 30 foote wide
29/01/1653	4	12	The dike called Gold Dike from the dreyne by the bancke side unto the new cutt be so sufficiently bottomed
19/07/1653	5	12	Ordered that from the dam over the 40 foot at Gold Dike ende and Gold Dike bee made sufficient to convey away the water of the were dike of the north bancke of Moretons Leame
31/01/1653	6	13	Highway Warboys Wood to the former of 60 foote wide called Puttocks drove through the fennes of Weston Ramsey and Warboys and so to bee continued to Copholder Bancke on the one side of the Adventurers dikes of Dikamore and where Dikamore is parted by a crosse lyne to leave on that way to Benwick towne.
31/01/1653	6	14	Highway leading from Mepall to Chartris hards comonly called Iretons way
31/01/1653	6	15	Highway from March to Whittlesey of 40 foot wide by the bank of Ransome Moore adjoyning to Burrow Moore and so through west fenne and Whittlese fennes to the gravell near the Cotes so to Whittlesey
31/01/1653	6	16	Highway from Moretons Leame south banke along Shaws dike to cross the highway that leaves from Whittlesey to Doddington to bee contynued on so far that all the lott land in West Fenne may have passage the way unto Vermuydens Eau way.
31/01/1653	6	17	Highway leading from Upwell to Honey hards and so through the fennes of Upwell Doddington and Chartris
31/01/1653	6	18	Highway from Wimlington to Manea by the bankecalled Stonea bank and so by Qxwillow Lode to the bridge upon the mere dike near Bedford Dreyne
31/01/1653	6	19	Highway leading from the bridge upon Well Creeke upon London Lode bank to Calcye Dike through the fens of Upwell.
31/01/1653	6	20	Highway from Friday bridge along by Elme Leame through Elme Comon and Creeke fenne unto March streame
31/01/1653	6	21	Highway upon the bank from Eastwood end to Stonea and so upon the cross bank to Brynnemoore and so through Brynnmoore to meet with the highway that goes by Elme Leame to Friday bridge.
31/01/1653	6	22	One highway upon Waldersey bancke from the chayne to Hobbs house and so a long the cross bank to Guyhurne
31/01/1653	6	23	Highway upon Coldham bank and so along from the chayne into Friday bridge
31/01/1653	6	25	Highway from Moretons Leame south bank along Shawes Dike to crosse the highway that devides Whittlesey and Doddington
31/01/1653	6	24	Highway from Peakirke to Guyhurne along the drain that now goeth that way on the north side there
31/01/1653	6	26	Highway from Whittlesey Fen unto Upward hards
31/01/1653	6	27	A highway in Somersham over the corner of the 4th Lott into the second
31/01/1653	6	28	Highway between Whinney Fenne and Longwood Fenne and those landes there between the 8th, 2nd, 3rd and 12th lotts to a bridge to bee made over the 40 foote dreyne in Byall Fenne

Date	No	Map Ref	Description
31/01/1653	6	29	The diserted north bank of Bedford river from Welches Dam to Salters Lode to bee a highway.
31/01/1653	7	30	A drove of 40 foot wide from Southery town to Hellswell leadinge through Southey and Feltwell Fens.
31/01/1653	7	31	Another high way of 30 foot wide leadinge to Brandon River from the former betwixt the severalls of Sir Thomas Wood howse and Feltwell Mow Fenne and by the Adventurers gravells in Feltwell severalls.
31/01/1653	7	32	A highway of forty foot wide passage from Owse to Littleport chaire and so along by the Adventurers dikes of Whelpmore and Burnt Fenne up by Sheppey Fenne, Beggard Lode and Mildenhall Fennes, up to the high growndes of Mildenhall
31/01/1653	7	33	Two highways meetinge with the former of 30 foote wide, one in Whelpmore betwixt the 6th Lott and the Adventurers peeces in Whelpmore abuttinge upon Owse, another nere Unley crossinge Popse Lode to Lakenheathe severalls
31/01/1653	7	34	A highway from the Middle Fenne along by the river to Prickwillow and from there alonge by the river of Owse to the ende of Mildenhall River and up by that river unto Isleham
31/01/1653	7	35	A highway from Littleport to Southery Fenne to the great sasse at Salters Lode and dam upon Owse and so to Downham bridge alonge the old Owse 60 foote wide
31/01/1653	7	36	The bank of Sir Edward Partheriches to be continued to Crouchmore for a highway
31/01/1653	7	37	Highway from Bymore place to Downham in the Isle to answer the way from Manea upon Oxwillow Lode of 60 foote wide
31/01/1653	7	38	A highway from Wicken to Reach of 30 foote wide along by the Adventurers growndes
31/01/1653	7	39	A highway to be made alon by the drain that comes from Fordham Brooke to Prickwillow
31/01/1653	8	40	Between Croyland and Peakirke to sett out 60 foote for a foreland next to the banke in the wash
31/01/1653	8	41	Foreland betweene Croyland and Brother house to bee at the indike of Porland
31/01/1653	8	42	Foreland from Guyhurne to Peterborough the northside
31/01/1653	8	43	Foreland rom Guyhurne to Elderwell and the high ground also 60 foote foreland on the wash side
31/01/1653	8	44	Foreland to the hards of Whittlesey to take 60 foote foreland at the inside
31/01/1653	8	45	Foreland of 60 foote wide from the foote of the north bank of the wash by Bedford Dreyne which foee on the banks to bee continued from Welshes dam to Salters Lode
31/01/1653	8	46	Foreland from Mepal upwards to Erith, also a foreland of 60 foote below Mepal
31/01/1653	9	47	Forelands upon the Grant, Mildenhall, old Ouse, Brandon and Stoake Rivers on each side
31/01/1653	9	48	A way to joyne unto Yaxley drove way for the most convenience of theire landes and the towne
23/02/1653	4	50	Whittlesey Dike from where Bevills Leame meetes it bee deepended accordinge to the depth as Bevills Leame downwards is to be made to the River Neane.
23/02/1653	4	49	The drain from Welshes Dam downwards to Salters Loade to bee made deeper 40 foote wide

Date	No	Map Ref	Description
23/02/1653	4	51	The dreynes through Marshland be made the next summer the depth as they were directed and that Elme Leame bee finished
28/03/1653	7	52	Narrow cut below Ely for boats to pass
21/05/1653	3	53	Sams cut bee speedily scowred out to its full depth
07/07/1653	5	54	South ovetoe at Guyhurne be forthwith taken up and the bank made up substantially
07/07/1653	8	55	Ordered that Whittlesey dike bee opened
19/07/1653	8	57	Ordered that a sasse of twelve foot wide be layed to let boates into the town of Croyland
21/07/1653	4	58	Repairing of the north bankeof Moretons Leame
23/02/1653	4	59	Vermudens Eau be deepened
31/01/1653	7	60	A drove from Mepal to Welches dam of 60 foote wide by the south bancke of Bedford Dreyne
31/01/1653	6	?	A highway of 40 foot wide from the sheddes where it crosses and meetes with the former at Bevills Leame unto Ramsey along by Delphes Dike through the fennes of Whittlesey and Ramsey and the lotted high growndes of Ramsey called Michwood.
31/01/1653	6	?	The highway from a little above the Stedds unto Neane so to joyne upon Vermuydens Eau with a bridge over Neane
31/01/1653	6	?	Copholder bancke to be a comon highway for the Adventurers
Map 7 - 1654			
15/03/1654	2	2	Speedy repaying of the banckes on the south side Bedford River in perticuler of the south bancke of Brandon River.
09/03/1654	2	1	Settinge down of the sasse below Littleport
21/03/1654	2	3	The dam at the south end of Crowland to be made five foot high from old South Eau Bancke cross the new river called Southea
21/03/1654	3	4	Ordered that the ende of the bancke next Peakirke bee repayred
05/04/1654	6	5	Take up the dike all allong Whelpmore by the river side
12/06/1654	6	6	Bottoming the 18 foot drain that goes through Thorney to Guyhurne
17/08/1654	7	7	The river of Nene, Whittlesey dike and Bevills Leame from Pophams Eau shall bee made of the same depth which Pophams Eau
17/08/1654	7	8	Widening, heightening north bank Bedford River
17/08/1654	9	9	That the north and south bank of Moretons Leame shall bee both made 7 foot high 40 foot wide in the seat and 9 foot broad on the top throughout.

Date	No	Map Ref	Description
17/08/1654	10	10	That Marshland Cuts where they are defective shall be forthwith bottomed, flagged and scoured out and the sluices sufficiently repayred and amended and that the banckes bee made of a sufficient height
17/08/1654	12	11	That new doors and sufficient reparation be forthwith made to the sluice at Stanground which is lately fallen into decay
17/08/1654	11	12	That the bancke from Peakirke to Crowland shall have 60 foot foreland
17/08/1654	13	13	The 16 foot drain from Honey to Pophams Eau bee fully bottomed and all the stops and dams taken up and removed and that it bee scoured out to its full appointed depth.
17/08/1654	14	14	That the coares and dams that are in the Sheyre dreyne for the first 3 miles from Clowes Crosse to the seaward beetaken away and removed and that it be made throughout as deepein the middle as on the sides
18/08/1654	4	15	Two sluices be set upon the river of Neane to preserve navigation
18/08/1654	4	16	The dam in Downham Eau near Downham Comon bee taken away and removed and the bridge over against Downham repaired and amended.
18/08/1654	4	17	The sasse upon Well Creek bee sufficiently repaired and the defect in the threshold thereof speedily amended
18/08/1654	4	18	The dams in Reach Lode be with all speed removed and taken up
18/08/1654	4	19	The sluice at Ely hards be repayred
18/08/1654	4	20	Part of plant load where it is defective for about a mile together be forthwith scoured and cleansed.
18/08/1654	4	21	That Sams his Cutt in every place were it is defective be with all speed cleared and scoured out to its full appointed dept
18/08/1654	4	22	Waldersey Bancke be repayred and heightened
19/08/1654	7	23	Bottoming of Rive Nene
02/10/1654 p.m	4	24	The banks on both sides the old channel of Owze bee forthwith made, repayred and amended
02/10/1654 p.m	4	25	The drain from Mildenhall to Littleport Chayre already begun bee forthwith effectually prosecuted
02/10/1654 p.m	4	26	There be 3 drains made for the three brooks of Methwold, Lakingale and Eariswell Mill brook or Fulban and Qui Mill brook
02/10/1654 p.m	4	27	The drain for the downfall of Hockwold and Feltwell severalls to run into Sams his Cutt bee forthwith done and finished
18/08/1654	6	28	The rivers of Stoake Brandon and Mildenhall bee forthwith rooked and cleansed.
18/08/1654	4	?	Part of Popes Loade where it is defective for a mile bee scoured out.
Map 8 - 1655			
21/02/1655	3	1	Repair north bank Moretons Leam
21/02/1655	3	2	Repair of Southey bank Dowsdale to Crowland
21/02/1655	3	3	Repair sea wall at Tyd
21/02/1655	3	4	Repair to Shire drain

Date	No	Map Ref	Description
21/02/1655	3	5	Repair bank from Peakirke to Crowland
21/02/1655	3	6	Repair north bank Bedford River
21/02/1655	3	7	Repair south bank Moretons Leam
21/02/1655	3	8	Repair Berry bank
21/02/1655	3	9	Bank of Holme receptacle
21/02/1655	3	10	South bank of new Bedford River
21/02/1655	3	11	the banckes on eyther side of the rivers of Grant, Ouse, Mildenhall, Brandon and Downhams Eau
18/04/1655	5	12	The new 200 foot river to bee made in the Wash from Welney to Salters Lode
1656			
16/02/1656	7	1	A new navigable sasse bee made and sett down at Salters Lode betwixt Downham Eau and the old Owze
22/02/1656	4	2	Several works bee made for carrying away the waters from Soham Mere in time of floods
18/02/1656	4	3	Dowsdale bank repaired
26/02/1656	4	4	Gravels in River Nene removed
26/02/1656	4	5	2 horse bridges be set down in Waldersey receptacle
17/03/1656	4	6	The north banke of Moretons Leam from Knarr Lake up to Northey gravel bee made 60 foot in the seat and nine foot high.
26/02/1656	3	?	Ordered that Horsecroft Bancke in the Middle Levell bee forthwith repayred and amended and the gravells in the river Neane removed and taken away, and that too horse bridges bee set downe in Waldersey receptacle to contynue the old way from Whittlesey to March.

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20 20/08/52 2, 20/08/52 2
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